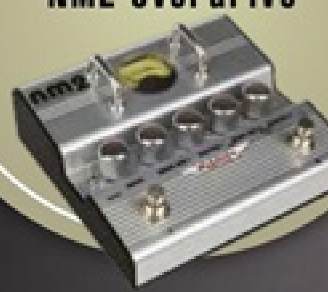
REVIEWS KILLER FENDER, DI CARLO, ELLIO MARTINA, NS DESIGN, MARKBASS AND ZOOM EFFECTS ON TEST!

Bass

ONE BASS GUITAR MAGAZINE

WIN!
Nate's Ashdown NM2 overdrive



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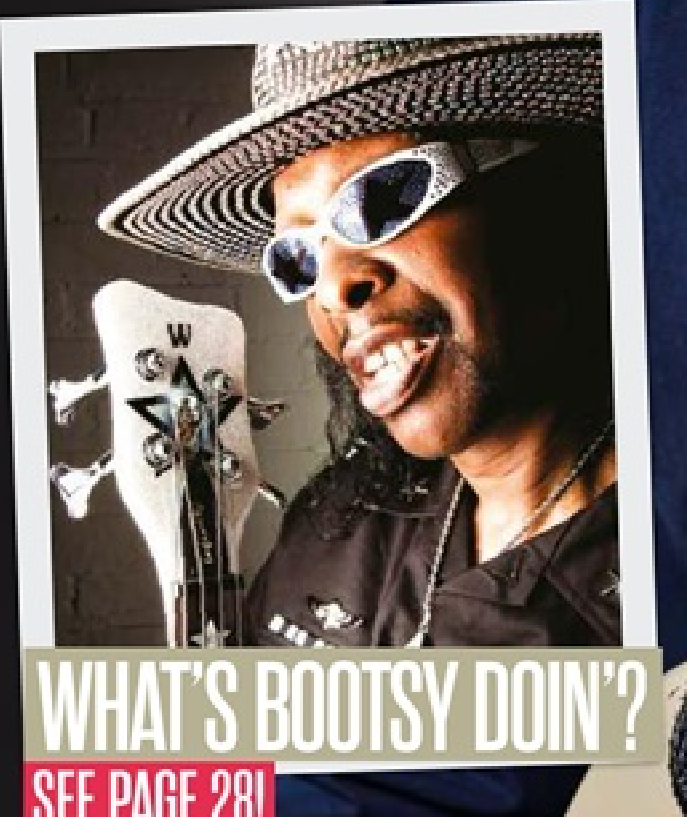
FOO FIGHTERS

NATE MENDEL

How to play bass with the world's biggest rock band!



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- HADRIEN FERAUD
- NATHAN EAST
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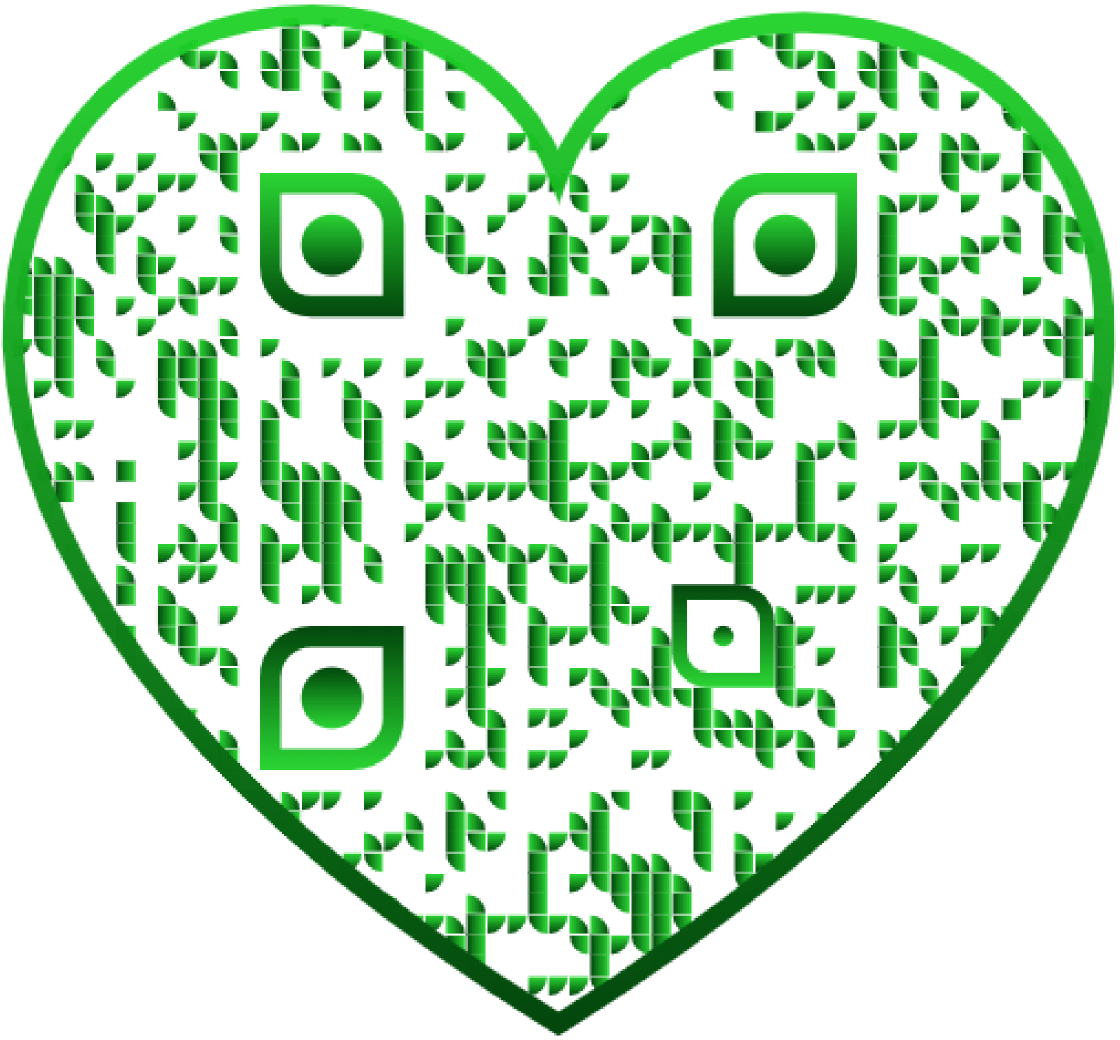

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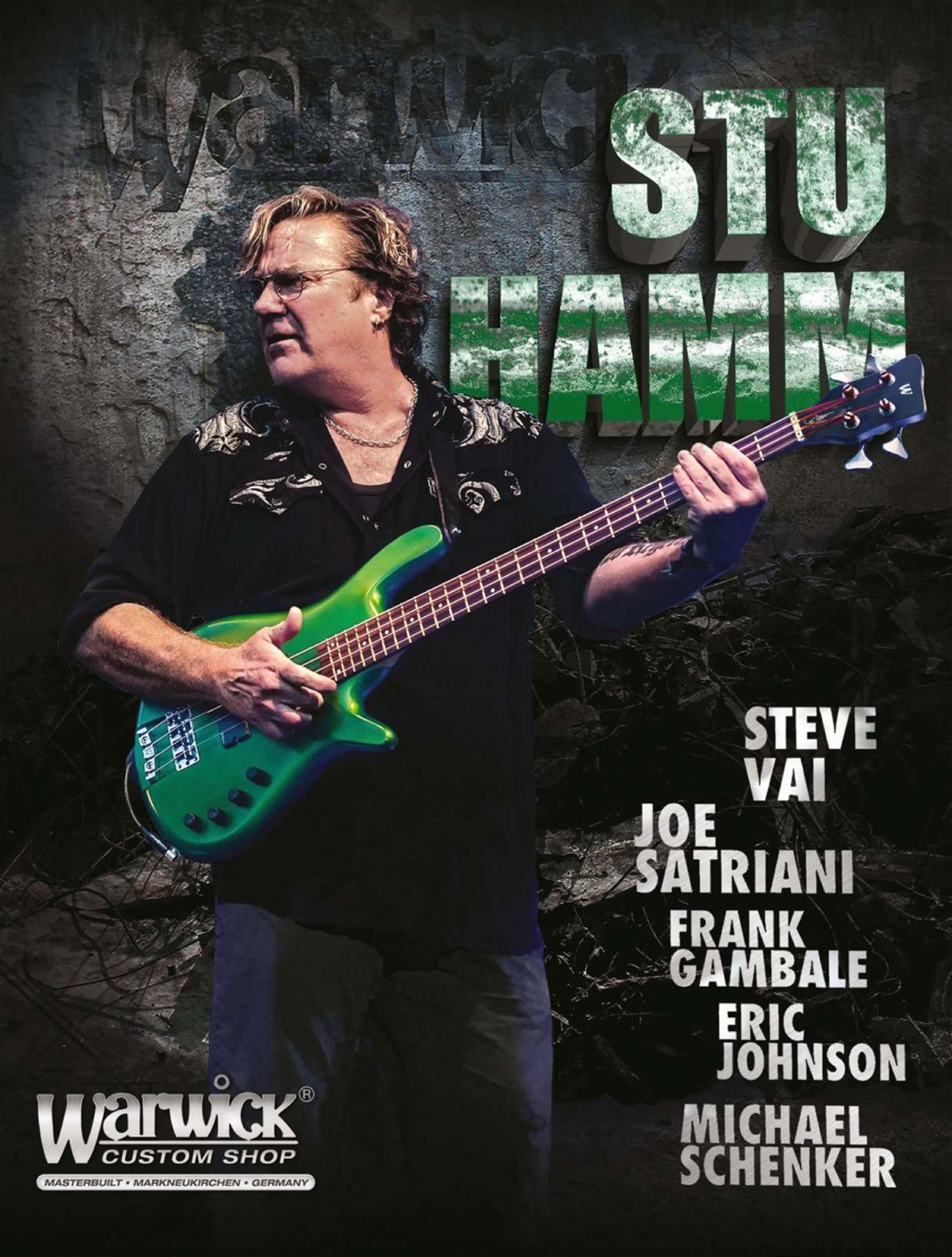

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EDITOR Joel McIver,
joel.mciver@futurenet.com
MANAGING EDITOR Kate Puttick
TECHNICAL CONSULTANT
Stuart Clayton
CONTRIBUTORS Tony Bacon, Angus Batey, Bob Battersby, Duff Battye, Andy Baxter, Nick Beggs, Jeff Berlin, Jamie Blaine, Silvia Bluejay, Mike Brooks, Joe Burcaw, Dave Clarke, Stuart Clayton, Ben Cooper, Joe Daly, Jon D'Auria, Hywel Davies, Daryl Easlea, David Etheridge, Mike Flynn, Paul Geary, Ian Glasper, Joel Graham, Ruth Goller, Spencer Grady, Paolo Gregoletto, Hugh Gulland, Chris Hanby, Huw Hopkins, Andy Hughes, Ken Hunt, Kevin Johnson, Bill Kopp, Steve Lawson, Phil Mann, Lee Marlow, Julian Marszalek, George Martin, Michael McKeegan, Stewart McKinsey, Greg Moffitt, Chris Mugan, Douglas Mullen, Ellen O'Reilly, Franc O'Shea, Jennifer Otter Bickerdike, Harry Paterson, Dayal Patterson, Simon Price, Raz Rauf, Alison Richter, Steven Rosen, Teri Saccone, Kevin Sanders, Amit Sharma, Ken Sharp, Joe Shooman, Rob Statham, Scott Surine, Jon Thorne, Freddy Villano, Ray Walker, Alex Webster, Sam Wise
ADVERTISING SALES Guy Meredith
GRAPHIC DESIGN Steve Dawson
COVER IMAGE Joby Sessions
STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY
Eckie, Olly Curtis and Stephen Kelly

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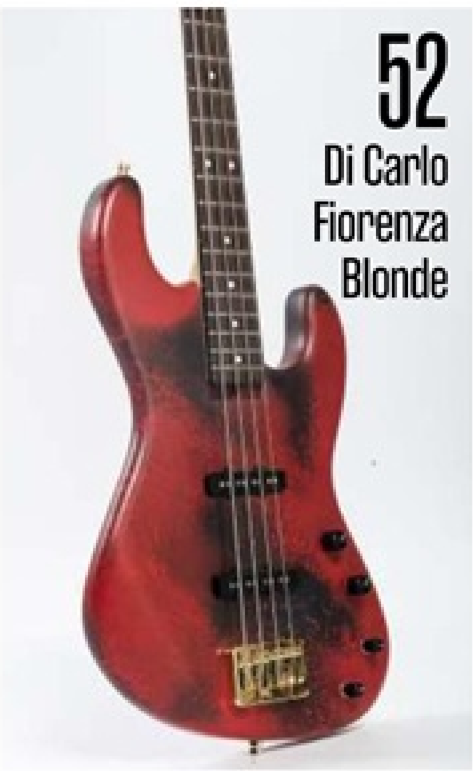
We kick off this issue with two phenomenal bassists – Nate Mendel of the Foo Fighters and Bootsy Collins of a whole list of bands, from James Brown to Parliament-Funkadelic to Deee-Lite and beyond. Both have seen things that would leave us speechless; both have played bass in scenarios that most of us can only dream of; and both are absolutely splendid fellows with tons of wisdom to impart to us, even though their backgrounds and musical styles are so different. That's why I love this magazine: it doesn't matter where you come from or where you're going, if you play bass you have a place here. Where better to be?

The good stuff continues, thanks to interviews with stars from all strata of the bass world. Check out Andre Cymone, a close friend as well as fellow musician to the late Prince, and Hadrien Feraud, a man whose grasp of the fretboard is like no other. Then there's the mighty Nathan East, a friend to *BGM* for years, whose anecdotes from his recent tour with Eric Clapton make stardom seem just that little bit closer. Switching to gear, we've followed up last issue's review of Fender's signature Flea Jazz with a road-test of Jaco Pastorius's own signature J-Bass. How do they match up? Dive into the review, as well as our verdicts on bass gear from Di Carlo, Ellio Martina, Markbass and more, and find out.

Finally, make sure you put March 3 and 4, 2018 in your diary. Why? Because those are the dates of the next London Bass Guitar Show, of course! After the 2017 event, the biggest to date, we've set ourselves a seriously high bar. Let's raise it next year! See you there...

Joel McIver, editor



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THE LOW DOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by *BGM*'s team of intrepid newshounds

DARK DAYS

Ace pedal-producers Darkglass have announced a new dual-voiced distortion pedal, the Alpha•Omicron, whose titular dot is bound to irritate magazine designers everywhere and thus gets points from us. Launched at NAMM 2017 and co-developed with Jon Stockman from the Australian rock band Karnivool, the Alpha•Omicron comes with the familiar Blend, Level and Drive controls. However, the Mod, Bite and Growl options – mix between two distortion circuits, high-mids boost and bass boost shelf respectively – are new, to us anyway. Expect to shell out £245 for this beast.

www.darkglass.com/creations/alpha-omicron

WALTER BECKER RIP

© Getty

Steely Dan, the American jazz-rock band formed by multi-instrumentalists and songwriters Donald Fagen and Walter Becker in 1972, epitomised the very zenith of the music industry's most profligate period. Young, ruthless and supremely intellectual, the two musicians gained a lifelong reputation for obsessive recording methods in the studio, forcing session musicians to record dozens of takes in search of the perfect sound – at a cost which would be almost impossible to consider these days.

The results justified this approach, at least on paper. Steely Dan sold over 40 million units from nine studio albums, won four Grammy awards and were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2001. Their music – slick, catchy jazz-rock with wry, observational lyrics – was inescapable for much of the group's first period of activity between 1972 and 1981, and the clarity and depth of the albums' production has made them popular reference points for studio engineers. On a personal level, however, Steely Dan's huge success proved difficult to handle for bassist/guitarist Becker, who developed a crippling drug addiction, endured a series of crises and withdrew from the band to regain his sanity.

Becker, who has died at the age of 67, was born on 20 February 1950 in Queens, New York City. Initially learning the saxophone at school, Becker turned to the bass and guitar and was taught to play the blues by Randy Wolfe, later famous as Randy California from the band Spirit. He met Fagen at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, and the two played in a series of unsuccessful bands such as The Leather Canary. This group was briefly notable for its drummer Chevy Chase, later a renowned comedic actor.

Quitting Bard in 1969 without gaining a degree, Becker moved with Fagen to New York, where they attempted to find employment as musicians. A stint with the pop group Jay & The Americans, with whom Becker performed under the stage name Gus Mahler, eventually led to a position as in-house songwriters at the ABC label in Los Angeles. This in turn was followed by a deal for their band, Steely Dan.

Three years of touring to support the albums *Can't Buy A Thrill* (1972), *Countdown To Ecstasy* ('73) and *Pretzel Logic* ('74) proved too exhausting to follow up, despite the acclaim which Becker and Fagen received, and Steely Dan became a studio-only project for the remainder of the 70s. This benefited their albums, with their most successful LP *Aja* boasting a glittering, widescreen sound that greatly impressed critics on its release in 1977. Becker was an accomplished bassist, holding down the low end in style, as well as co-writing songs such as 'Peg', 'Josie' and 'Deacon Blues', the last inspiring the title of the Scottish band Deacon Blue in the following decade.

By 1980 Becker was in crisis. In January that year, his girlfriend Karen Stanley committed suicide with a drug overdose in his apartment on the Upper West Side. The following year Stanley's mother attempted to sue Becker for $17 million, claiming that he had introduced her daughter to cocaine, morphine, heroin and barbiturates. A judge found in his favour and the case was settled. "I could barely understand what was going with her, really," recalled Becker. "If you've ever known anyone who's chronically depressed like that, it's hard to appreciate what's going on: you're looking straight at it and you still don't get it, because you've never gone through that."

A month after Stanley's death, Becker was seriously injured when a taxi drove into him in Central Park. "We were quantum criminals," he joked of the accident, in which his right leg was fractured in several places. "The car and I were attempting to occupy the same place at the same time." Wheelchair-bound for the completion of Steely Dan's album *Gaucho*, the last released in their first decade, Becker was also struggling with drug addiction and an unreliable business partner for Fagen: the duo split in June 1981. "I was busy dissolving everything else about myself," Becker said, "so it seemed the logical extension."

Moving to Hawaii and recovering from his addiction, Becker spent the next four years building a family. He married a yoga teacher, Elinor, with whom he had a son, Kawai; the couple also adopted a daughter, Sayan. The Becker family lived on a cattle ranch equipped with a recording studio, where Becker launched a second career as a producer. He recorded albums by artists such as Rickie Lee Jones, Michael Franks and China Crisis.

The occasional collaboration aside, Becker and Fagen did not reunite until 1993, when they toured again as Steely Dan and produced each other's albums. The duo continued to perform and record on a sporadic basis since then, receiving particular recognition for their 2000 album *Two Against Nature*. The duo's long-awaited induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame the following year was accompanied by honorary doctorate degrees for both men from the Berklee College of Music.

Outside Steely Dan, Becker recorded and performed in recent years with singer-songwriters Krishna Das, Rebecca Pidgeon and Madeleine Peyroux. His second solo album, *Circus Money*, was released in 2008, and he was inducted into the Long Island Music Hall Of Fame the same year.

SHOP TALK

A new feature in which we meet a renowned bass-maker.

This month: renowned amp manufacturer Marc Vanderkley.
The ever-cheerful Marc is a regular of the London Bass Guitar Show, having attended since the event's launch in 2011. This year he was again in his corner in the main hall, as always alongside fellow Dutchman Ellio Martina. This is the only show the two companies attend, and every year they manage to sell most or all of their show stock, and get back home with a pile of advance orders. For these one-man companies who prepare every item by hand, the aftermath of the show brings a lot of work, but Vanderkley still considers this yearly trip to London as a holiday rather than a chore, especially as now he knows most of his fellow exhibitors and looks forward to catching up with them.

The Vanderkley/Martina corner is also one of the most fun areas in the hall: throughout the weekend, names such as Chris Attwell, Moyses dos Santos and Ethan Farmer stopped by to plug one of Martina's basses into Vanderkley's high-end amp and cabs, and happily jammed away with each other, on their own, or with the owners to a cheering crowd taking selfies and filming on their phones.

Never mind the well-established, fast-selling Vanderkley cabs at the stand, this year it was mostly about Marc's new high-end, high-performance amp, the Spartan, and the new, powerful matching cab, the 210LNT NeoLite. "This year I have a new amplifier and a new cabinet," he says. "This amp is the successor to the Aurora I showcased last year, and it's simpler: 1200 watts, it only has an input, a five-band tone control, and the master volume. That's it."

The perfect simplicity referred to by the name does not imply any compromise in its high performance. "Despite being a little bit smaller, the Spartan is more powerful and sounds a bit warmer than the previous one," he adds.

Vanderkley designed the Spartan to reproduce detailed and clear sound in a transparent way at both low and high volumes. "The build process was frantic, but I just made it in time for the show!"

True to form, Vanderkley already had several Spartans on pre-order by the end of the first day of the show, despite them not being for sale until a few weeks later. That's how he likes it. "And then there's the new cabinet, which is a 210; I already have a 600W 210, the MNT, but this year's new model, the 210LNT, is designed to match the Spartan perfectly with its 1200W. Like its predecessors, it's lightweight [20kg] but strong."

The show model, with the customary Vanderkley dark red front, black cones and black carpet cover, featured a tweeter with protection circuit and custom-made neodymium drivers. "Like the other cabs in my range, in the 210LNT the drivers have a cast aluminium frame, the waterproof cone and the usual high-end specifications. The cab simply offers more power in a similar-size package." There were plenty of takers at the show, and long may that continue.

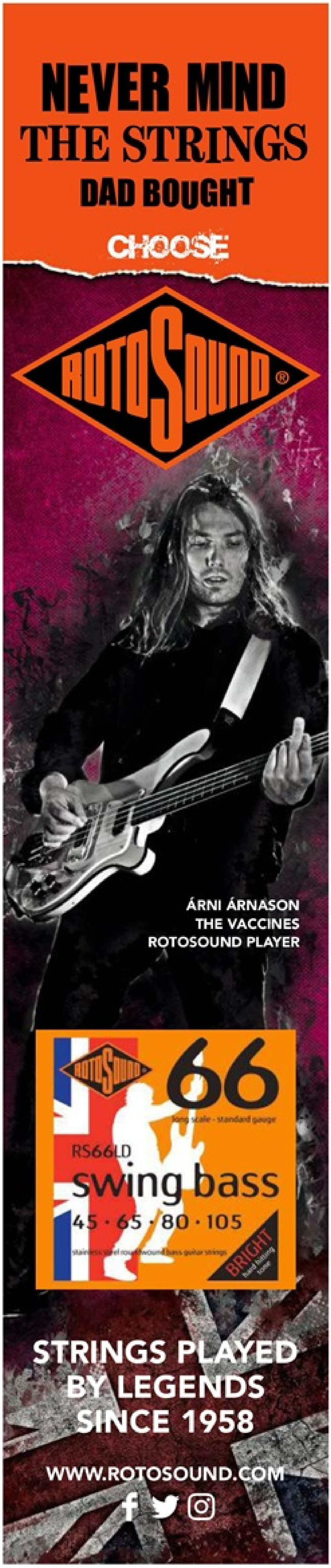
Silvia Bluejay

www.vanderkleyamp.nl

SMASHING

Alex Webster of death metal monsters Cannibal Corpse has bagged his own signature bass pickups, courtesy of Seymour Duncan. As he says: "I wanted to improve on the sound I've established, and also make the pickups a bit easier to work with in terms of output level. I've had a problem over the years getting a completely clean signal out of my basses without having to turn the volume down on the bass itself. Optimising the output level of the pickup seemed like a great way to resolve that issue; I'm super excited with what the guys at Duncan came up with for me. Now I have pickups that work perfectly with my style, and I can crank the level on the bass all the way and the tone is still tight, punchy, and powerful. Also, somehow they managed to add more clean low end than I had before. The pickups turned out amazing, I couldn't be happier." Keep an ear out for Cannibal Corpse's ferocious new album, *Red Before Black*, out on 3 November.

www.seymourduncan.com/blog/tag/hammer-smashed-bass



BASSWATCH

Every month, keen bass-spotter Ray Walker brings us an online bargain.
Duesenberg Triton £1800
http://tinyurl.com/yb5axnvv

Well hello there! Up this month is a Duesenberg Triton bass. This German-built workhorse comprises an American alder solid-body with a one-piece maple neck. It comes loaded with three Duesenberg Single-Twin humbuckers; these give you a noise-free tone, with a five-way switch and easy-to-use tone controls. The Indian rosewood fretboard has been perfectly hand-finished for a beautiful feel – this is what Duesenbergs are known for. All this, combined with 20 jumbo frets, cream binding and pearloid fret markers, make this one hell of a bargain in my book.

REVOLVER

Every month we tell you the bass-line we can't stop listening to

THIS MONTH: Rush, 'Limelight' (1981)

Bassist: Geddy Lee
You've heard of synaesthesia, right? It's essentially where your senses overlap – so, for example, you might 'see' a taste, 'hear' a colour or 'touch' a sound. A good example is Geddy Lee's bass tone on Rush's 1981 tune 'Limelight', a high point of that year's *Moving Pictures* album. When we listen to it, it seems crunchy, meaty, dark, fat and chocolatey (apply your own adjectives as you please). It's a bit like chewing on a massive Dairy Milk with nuts and raisins in it, or maybe we're just hungry... either way, get your ears (and teeth) around this stunning line post-haste.

Win

Thanks to the splendid folks at Ashdown Engineering, we have a Nate Mendel NM2 Double Drive pedal worth £119 to give away to the reader who gets this right.

What's Nate's other band called?
A Sunny Day Real Estate
B Cloudy Bay Real Estate
C Sunny Delight Real Estate

Answers to https://goo.gl/rxAXQX by 23 November.

Won

An Orange Kongpressor pedal goes to Babs Daniels from our competition in *BGM* 147. Thanks to all who entered.

WAH-NDERFUL

Black Sabbath's Geezer Butler has announced the Geezer Butler Cry Baby Bass Wah, a Dunlop product based on the company's Cry Baby 95Q Wah. They tell us, "We've modified the sweep so that, from the heel-down position, custom circuitry maintains low-end integrity by mixing in a portion of your dry signal, smoothly removing it as you move toward the toe-down position for accentuated midrange. This pedal also features convenient auto-return switching and an internal Q control to adjust the shape of the wah frequency bandpass." We'll be giving it the size 12 Doc Marten treatment in due course, so keep an eye out.
www.jimdunlop.com

BENEATH THE BASSLINE

Directed by former *BGM* editor Nick Wells, the forthcoming documentary *Beneath The Bassline* brings together some of the finest bass players on the planet. Travelling to Fodera Guitars in Brooklyn, Sadowsky Guitars in Long Island City and Aguilar Amplification in Manhattan's Soho district – and featuring interviews with the likes of Will Lee, Richard Bona, Billy Sheehan, Bootsy Collins, Duff McKagan, Felix Pastorius, Mark King, Lee Sklar, John Patitucci, Larry Graham, Marcus Miller, Robert Trujillo, Nathan East, Stanley Clarke and many others – the film is packed with never-before-told stories and anecdotes, as well as behind-the-scenes footage and impromptu jam sessions.

"This is a film for anyone who loves the bass guitar," says Wells. "We wanted to get to grips with what really makes these guys tick, find out how they evolved their respective sounds and styles, and get a glimpse into their world in a way that I don't think any other documentary has."

The film is set to premiere at this year's Doc N' Roll Film Festival on November 4 at Picture House Central in London. Tickets are available from www.docnrollfestival.com. Look out for further screenings and a global release on DVD and digital HD later this year.
www.beneaththebassline.com

THE MU

The Musicians' Union on fair pay for fair playing

The Musicians' Union's Fair Play Venue Scheme supports grassroots venues, and brings the fair treatment of musicians front and centre. The FPV scheme was created in response to the issue of pay to play, a practice operated by promoters or bookers whereby artists are expected to pay in order to play a gig, either by way of a cash payment, or by purchasing large quantities of tickets which they then have to sell to fans in an attempt to break even.

A venue may be considered a Fair Play Venue if it endorses the principles of our Fair Play Guide, available via theMU.org. The Fair Play Guide offers advice to both artists and promoters on co-promotions, ticketing deals, showcases and competitions, so that musicians can identify when a deal is fair. Fair Play Venues must also be against pay-to-play, which can be impossible and very costly for emerging acts.

© Getty

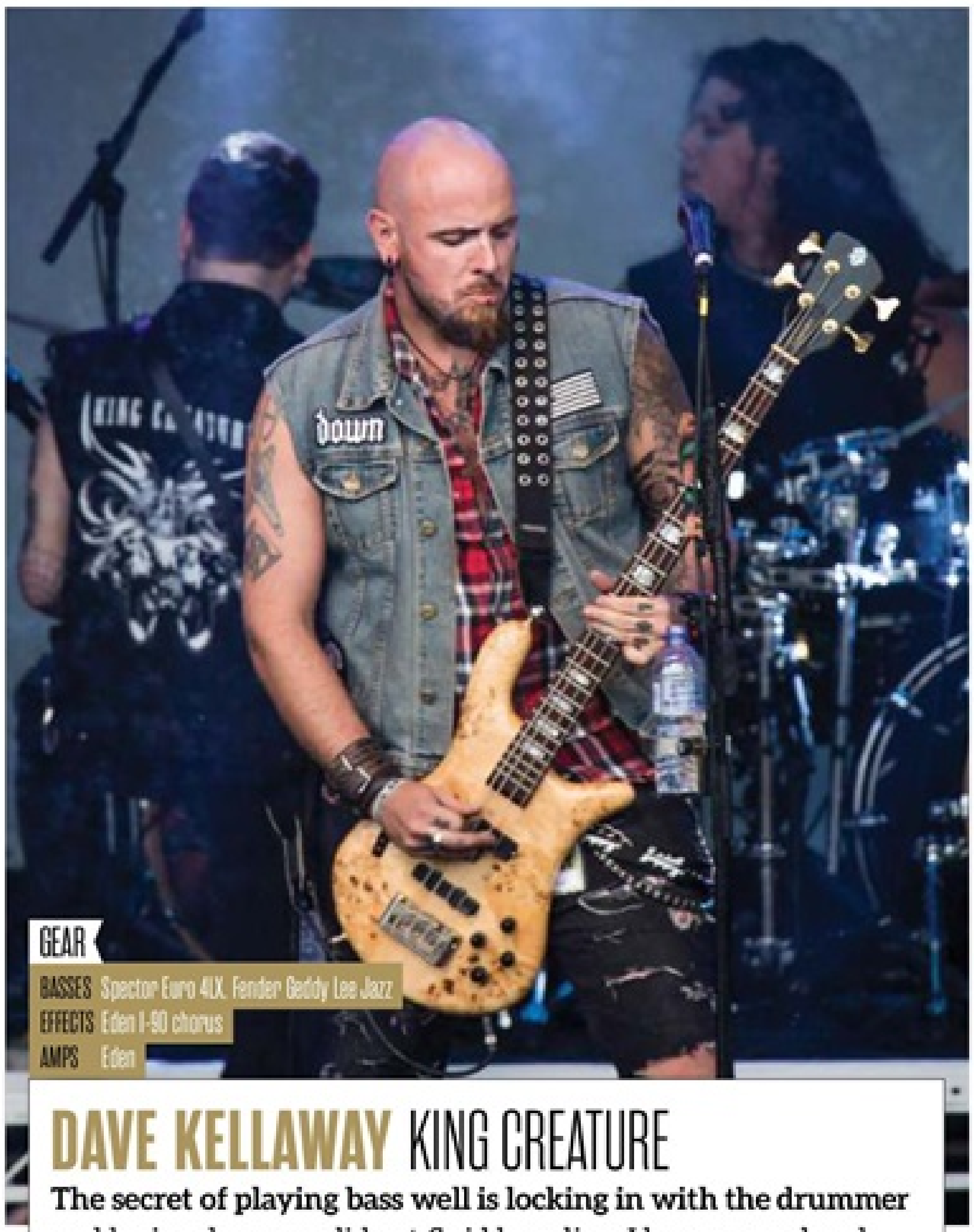
MU members will soon be able to search for grassroots music venues that have joined the MU's Fair Play Venue scheme on a new MU database. Until now, participating Fair Play Venues could only be identified by an official sticker at the venue. Now, you can find Fair Play Venues across the country in seconds. As well as contact information, the database tells you about the kind of music the venues usually puts on, what deals they offer to artists, and how to go about getting a gig with them.

"We are delighted that this growing circuit of venues across the UK has reached three figures. These venues provide a haven for nurturing local talent and opening their doors to visiting artists. This wave of venues have told us they oppose pay to play and support the principles of our Fair Play Guide. This is an important step forward in building relationships between artists and venues," says Dave Webster, MU National Organiser for Live Performance.

Find a Fair Play Venue near you via theMU.org, or to nominate a venue, email us at live@theMU.org.

BASSICALLY SPEAKING

Bassists reveal the tricks of their trade faster than a snapping D string



GEAR

BASSES Spector Euro 4LX, Fender Geddy Lee Jazz

EFFECTS Eden I-90 chorus

AMPS Eden

DAVE KELLAWAY KING CREATURE

The secret of playing bass well is locking in with the drummer and laying down a solid yet fluid bass-line. I have owned and played five-string basses before, but feel I can do all I need to with four. Although I can play slap, because I felt it was an important part to exploring the instrument, I don't because it doesn't really fit within my band's dynamics. I've got it up my sleeve just in case, though! I've used a lot of effects in the past but in King Creature, I use chorus as a different colour for certain sections. I also use the tube tone circuit on my Eden WTP900, controlled by the footswitch, to add more tube growl when needed. My first bass was a Vintage five-string in navy blue, and my favourite bass ever to date has to be my Spector Euro 4LX, followed closely by a Fender Jazz with Bare Knuckle pickups that used to be my go-to bass. My bass heroes are Phil Lynott, Geddy Lee, Rex Brown, Lemmy, Les Claypool... the list could go on and on. The greatest bass player that ever lived? That's a real tough question! I'm going to have to pick John Entwistle. Undeniably influential and game-changing. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose Pantera's *Far Beyond Driven*. I absolutely love the tone of Rex's bass on that album. Sometimes less is more, but more is always more!

www.kingcreature.com

GEAR

BASSES MTD 535, LaBella strings

EFFECTS Xotic, MXR, Moorer Pure Boost

AMPS TecAmp Puma 900, TecAmp S212, 64 Audio in-ear monitors

JASON PHELPS MICHON YOUNG

It's all about the groove! My endorsements are 64 Audio in-ear monitors, TecAmp Bass Amplification and FSP custom cables. I'm a five-string player. My first instrument was piano, and at the time it was tough finding bass players for the gigs I was booking. I decided to learn bass myself, and since I would sometimes play synth bass parts on the keyboard, I went with a five-string so I could handle the lower notes that I was already used to playing. At this point, my hands are most comfortable on a five-string neck. I've owned several four-string and six-string basses, but I always come back home to the five-string. I will use slap style when the music calls for it: I don't rule out any technique that might be appropriate for a specific song. One of the most important aspects to playing bass well is locking in with the rest of the band. Rhythm, harmony, tone, volume, all aspects of your playing need to fit into a specific place with the rest of the band so that everything works well together. My favourite bass ever to date is my current main bass – an MTD 535 with red nara top, ash body and neck, and roasted birdseye maple fingerboard. Working with Michael and Daniel Tobias is a dream – you describe the sound in your head to them, and they know exactly how to produce that sound. The greatest bass player that ever lived was James Jamerson. I believe that he truly defined the role of the bass guitar in modern music. There are tons of great players in the world, but most of what I love about bass can be traced back in some way to Jamerson. Bass is a wonderful instrument with such a wide range of incredible players out there, so try not to look at particular players and say 'I wish I played like him or her'. Find your own voice, develop it, and have fun being yourself.

www.jasonphelpsbass.com

TRACE ELLIOT

Weighing just 0.73kg, this revolutionary amp is small enough to fit in your back pocket. It's an ideal solution for any bassist who is concerned with size and weight, but isn't willing to compromise on tone or performance.

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LINDSAY COULSON KING KING

I would describe my bass style as cohesive, direct and simplistic, centred around blues and rock. The bigger the venue we play, and particularly when we find ourselves in an arena setting, the simpler the lines need to be to have impact and weight. Flowery runs can sound muddy and messy. The string spacing on a four-string is so ingrained in me that I feel like a fish out of water when I pick up a five-string, so I've recently strung one of my four-string Precisions up as BEAD, which is handy for recording. Always work with a drummer that has impeccable timing; listen to him or her and lock in; be consistent and confident, but remember to be sympathetic and dynamic as the music requires; and leave space for the rest of the band. My first bass was a budget Korean instrument with the brand name Starforce – it had a very long neck and a high action, and was hard work to play. A year later I bought a second-hand 70s Fender Precision for around £300, the best investment I ever made. I'm also very fond of my 1978 Music Man Stingray, and a second '78 Stingray which has a John East preamp fitted, giving me full control of the mids while retaining the vintage sound of the original two-band EQ. I find this essential in a loud live setting, when I need low mids to cut through the band. Our new album, *Exile & Grace*, is out on Manhaton Records. Our UK tour kicks off at London Shepherd's Bush Empire on 17 January.

www.kingking.co.uk

© Laurence Harvey

GEAR
BASSES Music Man Stingray, Fender Precision, G&L ASAT
EFFECTS Aguilar Octamizer, Aguilar Agro, Darkglass B7K
AMPS Aguilar DB 751, Aguilar DB 750, Aguilar TH500

ALEX STIFF THE RECORD COMPANY

I take a pretty minimal approach to playing bass. Being in a trio requires me to fill a lot of space and low end without getting too fancy. I also like the look and feel of beat-up, junky-looking instruments, and those tend to be four-string basses. Play in bands, and with other people, often. That's how you learn what works, how to get your rhythm in synch with other instruments, and how to find your voice in those low frequencies. Always play with your heart. My first bass was a black Ibanez four-string. Me and my mom found an inexpensive bass for my dad's birthday, so he could jam with me while I played guitar. He never played it, though, so slowly it moved into my room. My favourite bass ever to date is probably my current Fender Jazz. It's been with me on every gig and almost every recording the Record Company has done. I keep meaning to get it worked on, as many of the upper frets don't work. It's got a really high action, and old rusty strings. I guess I'm worried it may lose its mojo if there isn't any degree of struggle to play it. The greatest bass player that ever lived is Paul McCartney. I love the power of great songwriting, and his bass-lines tell a story of their own. The bass parts on *Sgt Pepper* are astonishing. With those vocal melodies, the bass didn't technically have to say a whole lot, yet Paul finds a way to make the bass both interesting, and work with the song. Believe in Craigslist.org; right before this band started, I was at a turning point in my life, where I didn't think I could continue making music for a living. The idea of starting up a new band seemed hopeless, but something inside me found myself clicking on the 'musicians wanted' section on Craigslist, and the only ad that I answered happened to be from our singer Chris Vos, who was looking for a bass player. I met him and we eventually started the Record Company. Basically you have to put yourself out there if you want things to happen. We also made our current record with very cheap instruments and recording gear in my living room, mostly from used items on Craigslist. It shows that you don't need to have expensive, fancy gear to make music that speaks to you.

www.therecordcompany.net

© Kim Zoebe

GEAR
BASSES Fender Jazz, Fender Precision, Ovation Celebrity CC 074
EFFECTS Ibanez Tube Screamer, Boss DD-7 Digital Delay, MXR 10 Band EQ, Electro Harmonix Big Muff
AMPS Ampeg SVT-AV, Ampeg B2R, Ampeg cabs, Acoustic B300HD

KAT BAX

My bass style is a cross between a lazy John Deacon and Duff McKagan. It likes the tasty notes but will sometimes just sit back and rock out. I endorse Ashdown, Lakland, SKB Flightcases – and Cocorose shoes! – and my first bass was a Washburn MB-4. I bought it for £180 from a music shop in Edgware when I was 16 and carried it back on the Northern line in a black bin liner. People with five- or six-string basses were sort of looked down on when I first started playing. It was seen as too flashy to have the extra string. Impressionable me picked up on that rather snobby attitude and I never transitioned to getting a five-string, although on some gigs now I do wish I had the low B… who knows? There's still time. I never had an interest in slap until I went to university, when suddenly it was a thing that everyone was doing apart from me! I wanted to be in a rock band, but suddenly there was a whole new technique I had to learn. I've spent a lot more time on it over the last year, and it's suddenly gone from being an irritant to a cool funky thing that I can use when I need it. The secret of playing bass well is learning the song. Learn the fretboard. Learn your scale shapes. Don't be scared. Listen to your tone. Play to the song, rather than making the song play to you. Ghost notes. Attack. Height of bass. A good amount of sleep. Have a good drummer who you can lock in with. Not necessarily in that order… If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose *Hours* by David Bowie: I love the tone on 'Thursday's Child'. I managed to get something close to it for a recording I did a few years ago called 'Hurricane' by Johnny Ashby. It's on Youtube – let me know how close you think I got!

www.katbaxmusic.com

GEAR
BASSES Darryl Jones Signature DJ-4 Lakland Skyline
EFFECTS Sansamp Bass Driver DI
AMPS MarkBass CMD 102P, Ampeg B100R, Ashdown ABM 500 EVO III and cabs

GEAR
BASSES Fender Dimension, Jazz, Precision
EFFECTS Darkglass B7K, Darkglass B3K, Darkglass Vintage Microtubes, Boss Bass EQ, Audio Technica Wireless
AMPS None

RYAN NEFF MISS MAY I

I am a rock and roll and heavy metal-influenced pick player. I've trained using my fingers, some slap and so on, but for my project I am primarily a pick player. I've been working with Fender and GHS strings since the fall of 2009. I also began working with the great folks at Darkglass Electronics in summer 2012, and Jackson around the same time. I'm also using JH Audio, and Audio Technica. I got myself a five-string Fender Dimension bass for the recording of Miss May I's fourth record, and the subsequent live shows, but it just wasn't for me. I'm a small guy and that bass was just way too big on me, unfortunately. I enjoy the attack of the plectrum with the high overdrive that I use, however on the new record I slapped on the song 'Never Let Me Stay'. That song just had the right vibe for slapping, so I went ahead. The secret of playing bass well is practice! I can see a drastic difference just in the first 15 minutes of a rehearsal while everyone gets warmed up and in the pocket. I can only imagine how large a difference that makes over a long period of time. Boring answer on this one, but it's the truth! The first real bass I purchased was after a summer of savings before my senior year of high school. I purchased a black Mexican Fender Deluxe Active Jazz from a shop in Ohio. The bass had dead strings and I didn't understand why the tone was so weak compared to a Squier I had purchased. I promptly took the bass back and picked up the Deluxe P-Bass model and that's how I started playing Precisions. I also had two custom shop Jackson basses that were great. One was stolen from the side door of our trailer before the Warped tour in 2015. Someone cut into the trailer and took about $4k in equipment. The other Jackson now has a massive crack in the neck, separating the binding from the fingerboard. After playing a 17k person gig in Japan at Knotfest, I decided to throw the bass through the air and it didn't end well. I still have this bass, but it needs some love to get it back in shape.

www.missmayimusic.com

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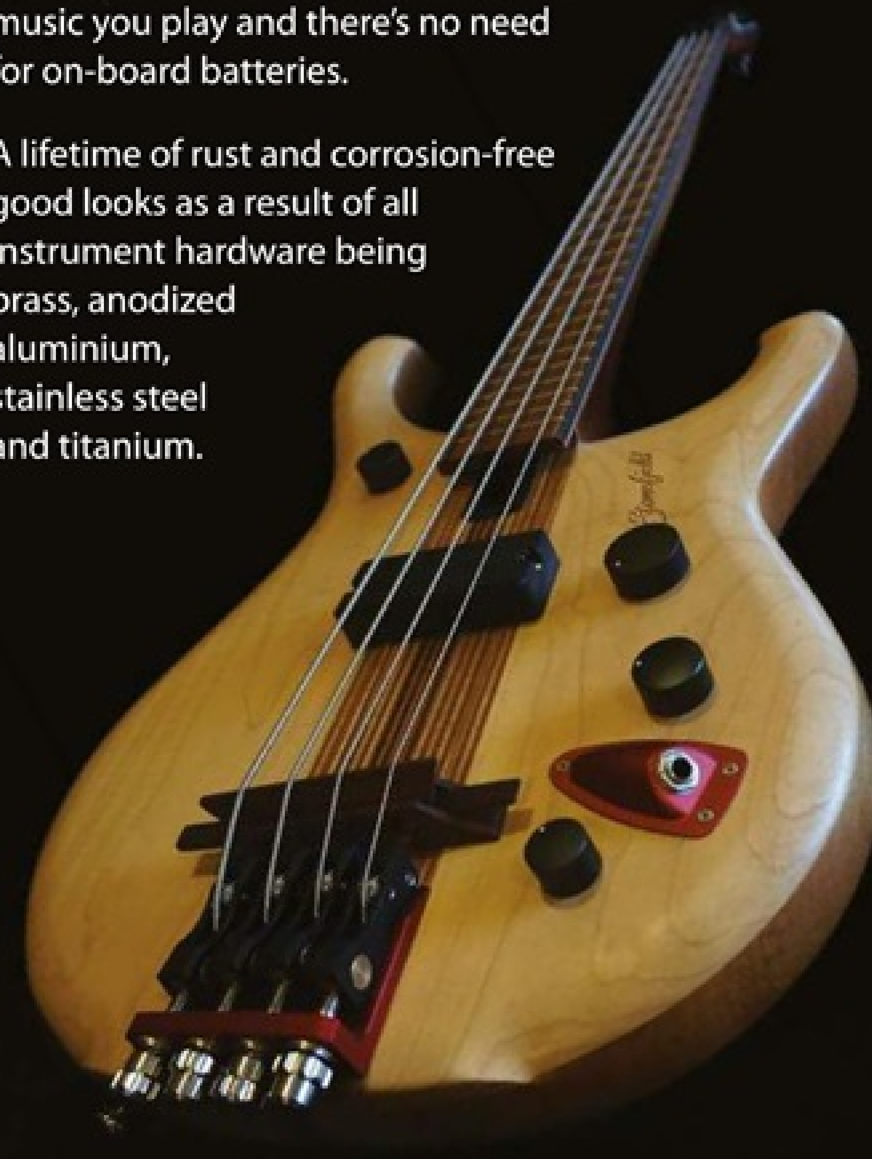

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PLAYERS SCHOOL

Our regular column on multi-instrumentalists' view of the bass continues, courtesy of the Players School in Florida. This month: Jason Berlin, son of founder Jeff Berlin

Many people don't want to work hard to reach their inner badass. Growing up in a jazz academic environment like the Players School of Music, I had no choice. It was imperative for me to find it. I've seen many people change their musicality drastically due to chord tone studies, so I approached studying bass in a chord tone-based way. I'm also a drummer, which is a constant battle with syncopations and rudiment studies – this is really a lifelong commitment.

The idea that bass is an underlying instrument in bands is true, but it is also an undeniable truth that bass in many forms is king of the musical realm. It wasn't until high school that I discovered that bass was far more important than I had thought, although I wasn't yet aware of the greats who were out there. I was quick to do my research, though, and at an early age began playing along to bands such as Incubus, System Of A Down, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and many more bass groove-driven bands.

Bass guitar is an enigma: only those who throw themselves into it can understand what playing bass is really about. Listening to Jaco Pastorius's tunes, as well as my father's music growing up, I heard a deep emphasis on rhythmic notion. I couldn't understand fully how a bass player could play the way Jaco did. This was considered traditional bass playing, but I later found out Jaco had previously been a drummer like me. It made much more sense, knowing that many bassists were drummers first. I then discovered Chick Corea. I was completely astounded at his note choices, and his overall musical language. I mean, no-one phrases the way he does! Once I graduated high school, I continued to explore jazz more deeply,

> "BASS GUITAR IS AN ENIGMA: ONLY THOSE WHO THROW THEMSELVES INTO IT CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT PLAYING BASS IS REALLY ABOUT. LISTENING TO JACO PASTORIUS'S TUNES, AS WELL AS MY FATHER'S MUSIC GROWING UP, I HEARD A DEEP EMPHASIS ON RHYTHMIC NOTION"

which opened a lot of doors for me as far as my perception went of how I wanted to play bass guitar. I wanted to play like Gary Willis, Ron Carter, Stanley Clarke and Christian McBride – but also like non-bassists such as Allan Holdsworth and Scott Henderson.

As I continued my journey through bass, a lot of complex music was thrown my way and I began to realise that music goes deep – I mean really, really deep. How can I go down that rabbit hole and see the bottom? The fact is that there *is* no bottom: music is endless and expansive.

I am in no way where I want to be as a bassist or a drummer, but I acknowledge that practising hard is the leading point in my playing. I've always had a theory that if you create problems for yourself in the practice room, you will have answers to those problems as you progress. The importance of practising can't ever be overstated. Every single person has musicality in them. It is crucial you develop your ear through metronome use and other ear training exercises, and a mentor or teacher can help you to explore ideas in that realm of ear development. Be yourself and be great!

http://playerschool.edu
Contact: Vicky Fulop Berlin, vfberlin@playerschool.edu

PROMENADE MUSIC

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4 String Basses

15278 - Bass Collection Jive Bass Black n Blocks
13994 - Bass Collection Portrait Fretless Bass
15510 - Bass Collection Rhythm Stick, Sunburst
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag

Cort

16343 - Cort Action 4 PJ Bass Guitar, Pore Walnut
14315 - Cort Action 4 String Bass, Black
16156 - Cort Action PJ OPB, Open Pore Black
16323 - Cort Action 4 String Lefty, Black
16396 - Cort GB74JJ AB Aqua Blue
15242 - Cort Jeff Berlin Rithimic 5 String Bass

Fender

16413 - Fender Aerodyne Jazz Bass Black
14643 - Fender Am Dlx Dimension Bass IV Cayenne
15830 - Fender American Pro Jazz Bass, Sunburst
16450 - Fender American Pro Jazz Bass, Natural
15951 - Fender American Pro P Bass Olympic White
15354 - Fender American Vintage '74 Jazz Bass Burst
5529 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass IV, AC Burst
15533 - Fender Flea Jazz Bass, Shell Pink
16448 - Fender Geddy Lee Jazz Bass, Black
16414 - Fender FSR Jap JB62 60s J Bass Walnut
15686 - Fender Mustang Bass PJ, Sonic Blue
8929 - Fender Roger Waters Precision Bass
16296 - Fender Special Ed. Noir Precision Bass
16596 - Fender Standard Jazz Bass, Black, MF
16595 - Fender Std MIM Jazz Bass Candy Apple Red
16263 - Fender Standard P Bass, Brown Sunburst
11069 - G&L Tribute L2000 4 String In Blueburst
9207 - Gibson SG Bass Guitar Worn Ebony Faded
11189 - Hofner HCT Shorty Bass, Black
12188 - Hofner Ignition Violin Bass, Sunburst

MUSIC MAN

16236 - MusicMan Caprice, Heritage Tobacco Burst
16477 - MusicMan Stingray HS SLO Starry Night
15941 - Musicman Cutlass Bass, Heritage TobBurst
16421 - Rickenbacker 4003 Bass, Fireglo
7890 - Rickenbacker 4003, Jetglo

Spector

11197 - Spector Bass Performer 4, Red
16270 - Spector Coda Pro 4 Natural Stain
14105 - Spector Legend Standard 4 Blue Stain
16175 - Squier Bronco Bass, Black
16151 - Squier Bronco Bass, Torino Red
16567 - Squier Classic Vibe P Bass 70s, Black
16441 - Squier Jaguar SS Bass, Sunburst, Used
7138 - Squier Vintage Modified Jaguar, Black
16569 - Squier Vintage Mod Jazz Bass 70s, Nat
15675 - Squier Vint Mod Jazz Bass 70s, CAR
16144 - Squier Jazz Bass Pack Black & Fender Amp
15890 - Tokai Jazz Sound Bass, Secondhand
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst

WestCoast

6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red

YAMAHA

14836 - Yamaha 2024 Bass, Sunburst, Secondhand
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
15998 - Yamaha TRBX204 4-String Bass, OVSunburst
15997 - Yamaha TRBX204 4-String Electric Bass
15996 - Yamaha TRBX204 4-String Bass, Black
13138 - Yamaha TRBX304 4 String Bass In White
15999 - Yamaha TRBX504 Bass, Trans White

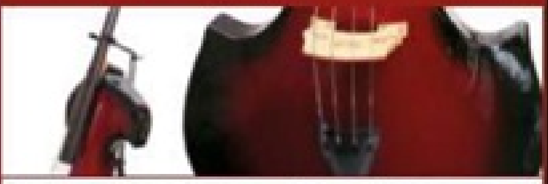
5 String Basses

15983 - Fender American Pro Jazz Bass V, Black
15363 - Cort A5 Ultra Artisan 5-String Bass, Nat
15725 - Cort Action DLX 5 FGB Faded Grey Burst
14312 - Cort Action V-DLX, Cherry Red Sunburst
12538 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Open Pore Nat
16526 - Cort GB75 5 String Bass, Black
16397 - Cort GB75JJ Amber Glossy 5 String Bass
15844 - Fender 5-String Jazz Bass, Blue, Used
15530 - Fender Deluxe Active Jazz Bass V, Black
13117 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass V Natural
15265 - G&L Tribute L2500 5 String, Blueburst
16180 - Ibanez BTB5 Trans Black, Secondhand
15407 - Marleaux Contra 5, Old Violin Finish
16288 - Overwater Progress Deluxe 5, Pre-Owned
12239 - Pedulla MVP 5 String Bass, Secondhand
10960 - Pedulla Rapture Fretted 5-String Bass
16120 - Shuker Horn Bass, Trans Turqoise, Used
15343 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Custom Bubinga
16329 - Spector Coda 5 Pro Black Cherry Stain
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
11196 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5 in Black
15797 - Squier Deluxe Dimension Bass V, Sunburst
9351 - Yamaha BB425 5 String Bass, Black, Used
13193 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Black
16000 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass

Acoustic Basses

10297 - Breedlove Solo BJ350/CMe4 Fretted
15234 - Fender Kingman Bass SCE with Case
10498 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Black
15771 - Ortega D Walker Acoustic Bass, Mahog
15117 - Takamine GB30CE Electro Acoustic Blk
14263 - Takamine GB72CE Jumbo Cutaway

Electric Upright Basses



4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double, Black
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Fretless Basses

13371 - Squier Vintage Modified Fretless Bass
5719 - Squier Vint Mod 4 Fretless Jazz
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst

String Deals

2 Sets of Elite (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Elite (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £35 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £40 inc P&P

Bass Combos

13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)

Ashdown

15190 - Ashdown AAA 30 8 30w 1 x 8" Combo
15187 - Ashdown AAA 300 210T 300w 2 x 10"
15189 - Ashdown AAA 60 10T 60w 1 x 10" Combo
15953 - Ashdown ABM410 Bass Combo, S-hand
8714 - Ashdown After Eight 20 Bass Combo
15192 - Ashdown B-Social Bass Amp with BlueT
8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten Bass Combo
15182 - Ashdown RM C112T 500 EVO 500w 1x12
15180 - Ashdown RMC115T 500 500w 1x15 Bass
15181 - Ashdown RMC210T500 EVO 500w 2x10"
13905 - Blackstar ID Core BEAM Bluetooth Amp

EDEN

2431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
13375 - Eden EC28 Bass Amp Combo
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
16046 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo
16028 - Eich BC112 Bass Combo

Fender

12686 - Fender Bronco 40 Bass Amp
13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
13083 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo
16446 - Gallien Krueger MB150S/112 Combo

Hartke

14095 - Hartke HD150 Bass Combo
9279 - Hartke Kickback 15 Bass Amp Combo

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin (300W1x15)
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W, 1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (300W,1x15W)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

ORANGE

15715 - Orange Crush Bass 100 Bass Combo
15716 - Orange Crush Bass 25 Bass Combo
15714 - Orange Crush Bass 50 Bass Combo
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

Roland

6320 - Roland CB100 (100W, 1x12)
4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w, 1x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
4434 - Roland Cube 60XL (60W, 1x10)
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)
16470 - Vox VX50BA Bass Amp Combo

Bass Heads

15176 - Ashdown ABM1200-EVO IV 1200w Head
14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
15115 - ABM 600 EVO IV 600W Ashdown Bass Head
14553 - Ashdown Retroglide 800 Compact Bass Head
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13198 - Eden WTX500 Bass Amp Head
16340 - Eden WTX500 Bass Amp Head Used
16044 - Eich T1000 Bass Amp
16043 - Eich T300 Bass Amp
16027 - Eich T500 Bass Amp
16026 - Eich T900 Bass Amp
15484 - Fender Bass Man 800
16318 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Bass Amp Head
16319 - Gallien Krueger MB500 Fusion Bass Amp H
9349 - Harke HA2500 Bass Head
9027 - Harke Klio 1000 Bass Head
12382 - Harke LH1000 Bass Head
16339 - Harke LH1000 Bass Head, Used
15588 - Harke TX600 Bass Amplifier
14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
9036 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson Bass Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
9725 - Markbass TTE801 Randy Jackson Bass Head
15109 - Orange 4 Stroke 300 Bass Amp
15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head
16531 - Trace Elliot Elf 200 Watt Bass Amp Head

Bass Cabinets

13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet
5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
15766 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15) Used
15178 - Ashdown ABM210H EVO IV 300w 2 x 10"
15460 - Ashdown ABM210H NEO
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
6450 - Ashdown MAG410T Deep (4x10)
15185 - Ashdown RM210T EVO 300w 2 x 10"
15183 - Ashdown RM 112T EVO 300w 1 x 12"
15184 - Ashdown RM 115T EVO 300w 1 x 15"
15186 - Ashdown RM 610T EVO 900w 6 x 10"
14196 - Blackstar HT Metal 412A Extension Cab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13195 - Eden EX210 Bass Cab
16054 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16055 - Eich 110XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16041 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohms
16042 - Eich 112XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohms
16075 - Eich 115L Bass Cabinet
16052 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16053 - Eich 115XS Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16039 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16040 - Eich 1210S Bass Cabinet
16071 - Eich 210M Bass Cabinet
16069 - Eich 212L Bass Cabinet
16070 - Eich 212M Bass Cabinet
16048 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16050 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
16068 - Eich 410L Bass Cabinet
16067 - Eich 610L Bass Cabinet
16061 - Eich 612XL Bass Cab
16065 - Eich 810L Bass Cabinet
16321 - Gallien Krueger CX115 Bass Cabinet
16444 - Gallien Krueger CX210 Bass Cab
16320 - Gallien Krueger MB210 Bass Amp Combo
14254 - Hartke 210XL 2 x 10" Bass Cab
5476 - Mark Bass STD104HR (4x10)
6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
16013 - Markbass 123 Alain Caron Bass Cab
16014 - Markbass CMD Super K1 Alain Caron
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab
6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

GEAR OF THE MONTH

In which three renowned gear experts nominate their bass, amp and effects unit of the month. Whether new or old, cheap or pricey, simple or complex, this gear has earned its place in our affections through simply being brilliant...

BASS

Back in 1995, as part of Trace Elliot's 15th anniversary celebrations, 15 four-string and 15 five-string basses were commissioned and made by Status Graphite. The resulting 'Super Jazz' instruments were then presented to selected Trace artists and distributors. The following year, having created a real buzz with the anniversary T-Bass, Status began producing a standard production instrument in a variety of colours and finishes. This particular model is one of the aforementioned four-string basses, resplendent in a metallic British Racing Green finish: the original tortoiseshell pickguard has warped and been replaced with a black pearloid plate. With a more rounded and curved body compared to the more slab-like production models, this is a sleek bass to wear and play, as well as being one of the earliest basses to include graphite reinforcement rods in the neck and individual bridge 'monorail' units. The Hyperactive single coil pickups are backed up with a two-band Status circuit, with volume controls for each pickup, bass and treble EQ and a circuit bypass switch. Opinions were split regarding the 3-D angled headstock, but in practical terms, it makes tuning easier for the player. While these are not common instruments, prices are reasonable for second-hand models. Well worth investigating!

Mike Brooks

AMP

As with many fledgling amp companies of the late 1960s, the Stanford-educated engineer Robert Gallien started his company, GMT, from his garage at home. His progressive designs, often using transistors rather than valves, were an immediate success. Carlos Santana bought one of the very first amps he made and used it at the legendary Woodstock festival, where it was seen and heard by thousands. You can't get better publicity than that. In the early 70s, Gallien teamed up with engineer Rich Krueger, and the GMT company became the now familiar Gallien-Krueger. Amps and speakers for bass players were an important part of the company's business from the start, and one of their most successful designs was the MB150 bass combo, which has been in production ever since. There are lots of innovative features on this amp, such as the 800RB-inspired four-band EQ with pre-shape filters and an adjustable limiter, but perhaps most intriguing, the whole cabinet is made from aluminium, with the top forming one massive heat sink. Add a pokey 150-watt analogue amp and a specially designed ceramic speaker, and you have what many players consider to be the ultimate studio and session amp.

Kev Sanders

FX UNIT

There's a whole lot of folklore when it comes to old pedals. You'll hear pundits claiming that the original OC-2 is better than the new ones, or that one of the 10,000 Big Muff pedal variants is the only one with true mojo... Or, in this case, that the original Digitech Whammy is way better than all the others. Now, it's true that V2 really didn't seem to have the magic of V1, but nostalgia aside, pitch-shifting tech of all kinds has come on in leaps and bounds in the last decade, and this updated Bass Whammy is evidence of that. Whether you want to send your bass sound into the rumbling, earthshaking basement, or go up an octave for stratospheric squeals, the Whammy is your friend. From Doug Wimbish to Julie Slick, Michael Manring to Justin Chancellor, bass geniuses have been using the Digitech Whammy to create surprising signature sounds for many years. If your band is a trio, the Bass Whammy can really help to broaden your arrangement options, without resorting to the 80s metal trick of having an acoustic guitar attached to a mic-stand. Go and try one – you may find your new calling. If nothing else, you may take a chunk out of the guitarist's overinflated ego...

Steve Lawson

POWER BASS

NHS physiotherapist, martial artist and bassist Ben Whybrow gets you into shape for injury-free bass playing. This month: load management for bassists

Load management is considered one of the most important aspects of injury prevention in sports medicine; entire conferences have been dedicated to this one topic. It's actually fairly straightforward to understand, and simply requires some common sense and planning to be very useful for the amateur or professional bassist.

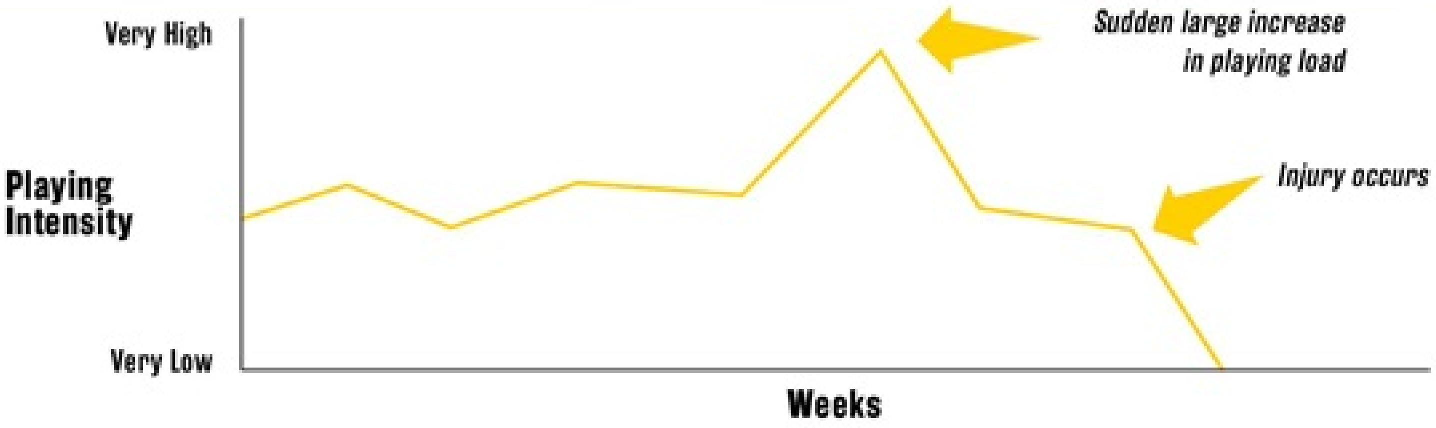
What's the idea?
Medical scientific literature describes the term 'load' as the amount of effort or strain going through the body over a period of time, whether over seconds, minutes, hours, days and so on. Of course, this is individual to each person and depends on what we do with our bodies. It shouldn't be hard for any bassist to comprehend that when you suddenly increase the load going through your body in a short period of time – or over a longer period of time, without sufficient rest – then you are more likely to develop aches and pains. Anyone who has done a high intensity exercise session after three weeks of watching TV on the sofa can attest to this. Trying to monitor and control the load to reduce the risk of injury has become very popular, in particular among heavy instrument users such as bass players.

How can I manage my own load to reduce my injury risk?
You'll be glad to hear that it doesn't require a team of scientists or expensive equipment – a pen and paper, or the notes app on your phone, will do. Document how long your practice or performance sessions last in minutes and how strenuous you found them from zero to 10 – zero meaning no effort, 10 being fully wiped out. Multiply these together to get a number and add these scores up to find your daily, weekly and beyond combined scores. The table shown below is an example.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Individual Practice: 60 mins x 4/10 = 240	Individual Practice: 45 mins x 2/10 = 90 Jam Night: 120 mins x 3/10 = 360	Group Practice: 90 mins x 5/10 = 450 Individual Practice: 30 mins x 3/10 = 90	Individual Practice 45 mins x 6/10 = 270 Small Gig: 60 mins x 3/10 = 180	Individual Practice: 90 mins x 4/10 = 360 Large Gig: 90 mins x 6/10 = 540	Group Practice: 90 mins x 5/10 = 450 Large Gig: 90 mins x 7/10 = 630	Rest
240	450	540	450	900	1080	0
Week Total = 3660						

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Week Total = 4140	Week Total = 4030	Week Total = 4280	Week Total = 5250	Week Total = 4150

Sudden increase in playing load = Increased injury risk



If you are planning on increasing the amount you are practising and performing for the first time, or after prolonged time off, do it slowly over time: the increases in your scores over each week should be small. If you know that you're going to have to practise or perform a lot in a short period of time over a week or month, then give yourself time off around those times so your tissues can recover. If you get this right, your injury risk will fall.

www.thejudophysio.com, @TheJudoPhysio

APPLIED IMPROVISATION WITH ROCKSCHOOL

Altered scale studies with Rockschool's Nik Preston

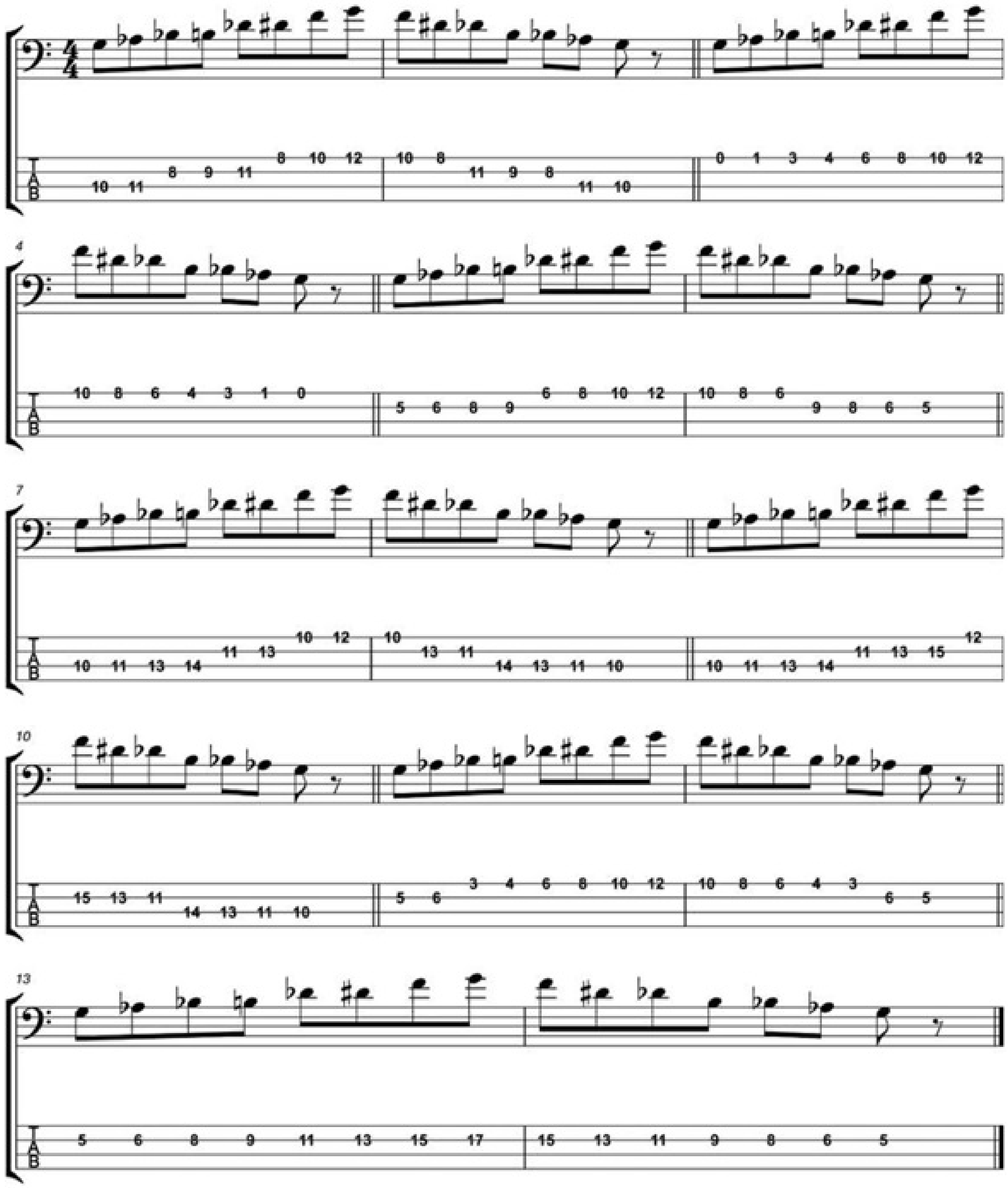
Welcome back! The fingering system we choose to adopt is a deeply personal choice, and plays a huge part in developing our own signature approach to music. It is quite easy to have good internal sense of time, yet make timing errors based on having insufficient fingering options in order to execute a line or passage. Equally, our ability to execute sight-reading passages can be hugely limited by an efficient fingering system – as changing position is often dictated by the dots and not necessarily by our own preferences!

Quite often, when we first begin learning a scale we're introduced to fingerings that enable us to play as fast as possible. However, as we become more advanced, we need as many permutations at our disposal as possible. Some of these permutations may not seem efficient at first, and indeed they may not be if we're trying to execute a scale at speed, but there is a difference between fingerings for speed's sake (although these will always be important) and fingerings designed to improve fretboard familiarity.

Using a G altered scale as an example I have outlined seven separate fingerings over a single octave. The first four bars show two contrasting ways of fingering the altered scale. The first will enable us to play the scale as fast as our physicality allows, while the second will literally slow us down and force us to think about the notes in the scale.

Fingerings on one string dictate that we have to think about the scale intervallically at first, rather than as a shape: this is vital for improvising over chord sequences. They also demand that we learn to change position efficiently if we want to avoid either cutting notes short, or any discrepancies within our execution.

EXAMPLE 1



Grouping the notes in pairs per position shift is highly effective, but will never be as fast as playing in one position. The choices you employ should always be personal, though – there really isn't a single way of doing this. Essentially, we can never have enough fingering options. We need to experiment to find options that enable us to phrase as our ears, and the music, dictates. Exploring scales across the fretboard rather than in one position is a great foundation for anyone looking to develop options as an improviser.

Take this study as slowly as you need to, in order to be able to name the intervals of the scale while playing. It will pay huge dividends!

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NO TREBLE

Kevin Johnson gets a painful case of GAS

No Treble readers came down this month with some severe cases of what we like to call GAS, aka 'Gear Acquisition Syndrome'. Bass builders from around the world were on their game this month in delivering that retro-styled goodness we all love. At the top of the heap was Sire Guitars, who expanded their Marcus Miller line of basses with the P7 and V9 models. While the V9 simply adds a quilted veneer to their flagship V7 bass, the P7 marks their first instrument featuring a split-coil pickup. It also has a single coil in the bridge position for a P/J configuration which the company calls the Marcus Super Precision set. The P7 comes with either a swamp ash or North American alder body, matched with a one-piece Canadian hard maple neck. Sire also fits it with a three-band active/passive EQ complete with a sweepable mid-frequency. The versatile preamp was designed with Miller to get his unique sound in a flexible package.

Next up was a signature bass for Youtube bass star Davie504, created by Bristol's own Chowny Bass. The Retrovibe by Chowny EVO Davie 504 Signature blends components of classic bass design, including a two-band preamp with Bass and Treble knobs. 'Featuring the Retrovibe Stinger '77 preamp that is designed to the spirit of the original bass preamps to give a great unique bass tone, the EVO features a red cedar Body and Maple J-Profile neck with a satin finish and 24 fret maple fingerboard,' the company explains. It's loaded with a Chowny MM-style humbucker to round out the tone. It also comes in five burst finish colors to accessorise with: Red, Blue, Black, Green, and Purple.

On the boutique and handmade end, luthier Chris Swope introduced the Dakota bass, which screams old school with a Candy Apple red finish and Red Tortoise pickguard. The bass's lightweight alder body is reminiscent of shapes from the 60s, and its rosewood fingerboard has three dot inlays at the 12th fret for a subtle yet cool aesthetic. The Dakota has a Swope original humbucker and is completed with Gotoh hardware.

My personal favourite this month was a jaw-dropping take on the fliptop bass combo of years past. Seattle's Verellen Amps created a one-off design they called the Meatflip, that put the company's popular Meatsmoke preamp into a 100-watt fliptop tube amp. As such, it has footswitchable clean and overdrive channels with a three-band EQ. The cabinet is finished in a deep red reminiscent of a fine wine. Luckily, it garnered so much attention that builder Ben Verellen decided to put it into a small production run. While not drooling over the latest and greatest bass gear, No Treblers found time to do a little studying. Damian Erskine replied to a question about playing outside of chord changes with a fantastic video. No Treble's newest columnist Tim Fletcher continued his transcriptions featuring the work of unsung British bassists with a look at Graham Maby's line on Joe Jackson's 'Is She Really Going Out With Him?' Until next time, love the gear you've got!

www.notreble.com

BASSCHAT

Depping analysed by Basschat's Silvia Bluejay

A music forum wouldn't feel right without some mention of depping, and Basschat is no exception. Are dep musicians the Devil's tool for ruining your band's performance (and reputation), or do they provide salvation from flaky bandmates and cancelled gigs? One recent thread in General Discussion examines our often contrasting feelings both as employers of deps and as deps ourselves.

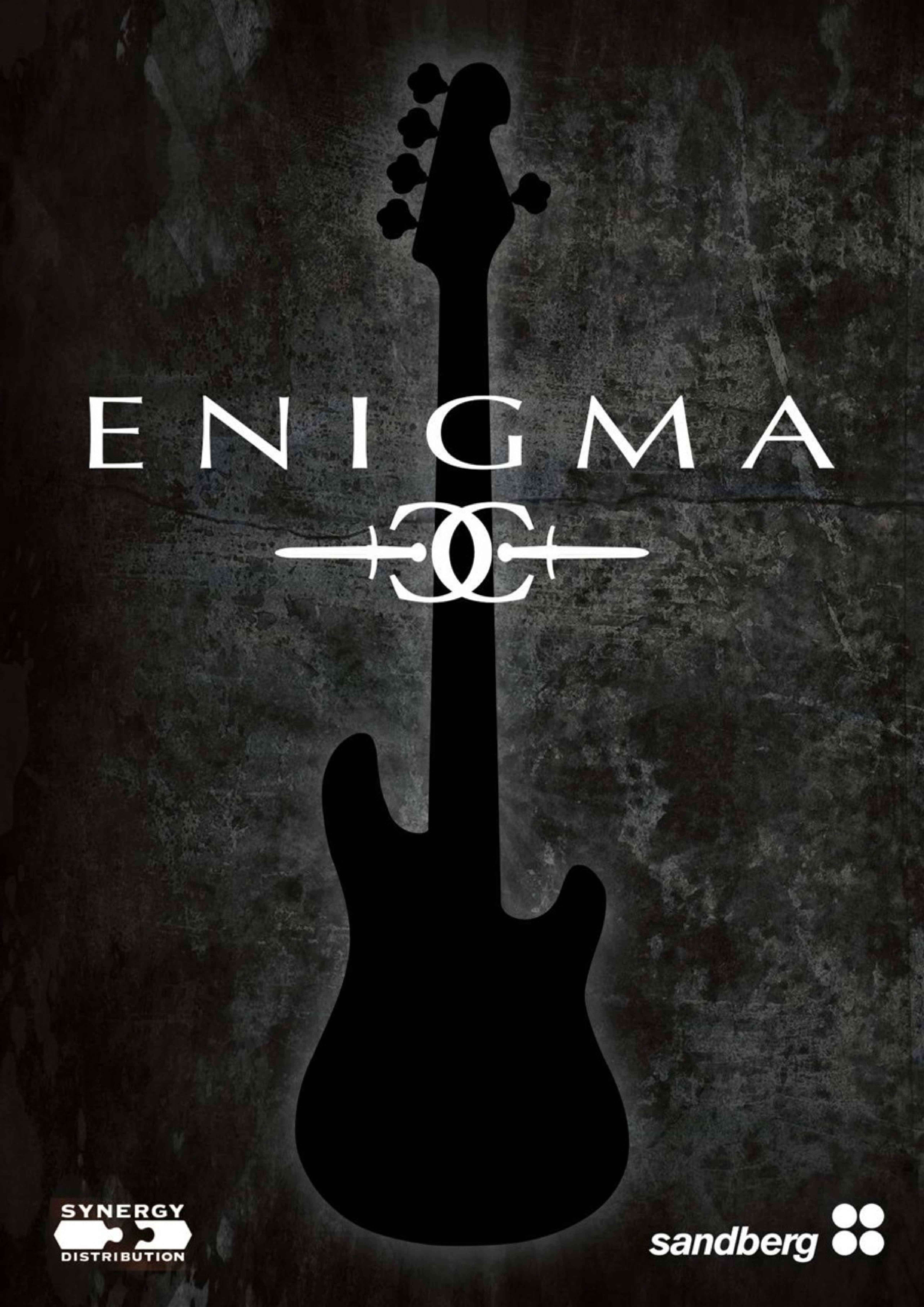
There is a consensus that depping for originals bands is not the same as depping for covers bands. Most Basschatters' originals bands prefer to cancel a gig when a member can't make it, rather than going through the process of choosing a suitable dep, sending them detailed notation, charts, recordings and other instructions, and then having several rehearsals to make sure everything gels together. Many bands aren't that organised, even with their regular members…

Unless the band is famous, there is precious little money for originals in the local circuit, so having to pay a dep may cause higher losses than cancelling. If those instructions aren't forthcoming, or aren't up to scratch, or there is no time for rehearsals, then the dep won't be able to do justice to the songs, and the performance will probably end up being the proverbial car crash. Many Basschatters are, in turn, uncomfortable with depping for originals bands.

Covers bands are a different matter, although – in true Basschat fashion – even here there isn't complete agreement. A pub rock band is a different beast from a function band, not just in the extent of its repertoire, but also in the selection and arrangement of songs. While function bands cater for all ages and musical tastes, pub bands often aim to carve a small niche for themselves while still retaining the broad appeal of crowd-pleasers. Some Basschatters would prefer their pub band to cancel a gig rather than get a dep who, even when perfectly competent, simply wouldn't sound the same, and would give the rest of the band a less enjoyable time on stage. Whether the audience would ever notice the difference is another matter entirely, but that's not the point: since we can rarely make a living out of music, the band's fun factor plays a big part. Other posters are instead perfectly comfortable with being replaced – or being a replacement – on bass for that rousing rendition of 'Mustang Sally'. Or at least, they're comfortable as long as their dep isn't a better bassist or more fun to be around.

Basschatters' function bands appear to have veritable revolving doors, with one or more deps on stage at each gig being the norm rather than the exception. All the musicians involved are pros, the pay is much higher, and the aim is not to target a specific group of customers with tailored setlists, but to offer a sleek performance that gets mixed audiences to dance and enjoy their party. Cancelling a gig each time a regular member is ill, busy or on holiday wouldn't be financially viable. Many on Basschat regularly work as deps in function bands, and can confirm that it would take an unusual level of incompetence to compromise a gig. Having said that, everybody has at least one depping-related horror story: one poster was even unlucky enough to end up unwittingly recounting an anecdote in front of the actual person originally involved in it! What's your own experience? Let us know on the forum.

www.basschat.co.uk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FIGHT CLUB

What's it like to play bass in one of the world's biggest rock bands? Nate Mendel tells it like it is to Joel McIver

Pics: Joby Sessions

T*he power of rock compels thee* is a phrase that we use a lot around *BGM*'s secret command bunker, partly because it makes us chuckle as we boil our strings but also because there's a certain truth hidden in there for bassists of the loud persuasion.

Take Nate Mendel of the Foo Fighters for instance, an affable chap who has called us up to talk about his band's new album, *Concrete And Gold*, their ninth in the 23 years since sometime Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl formed the group. If you're familiar with the Foos' big hits – 'Monkey Wrench', 'Learn To Fly', 'Times Like These', 'Breakout' and so on – you'll know that they specialise in Rock with a capital R, designed for stadiums and beloved of crowds worldwide.

Who's bigger than the Foo Fighters in this second half of the 2010s, in terms of numbers of gigs played at truly huge venues? No-one in rock apart from U2 and Guns N'Roses, although Metallica and Iron Maiden equal them in the heavy metal world, and Taylor Swift, Justin Bieber, Adele, Ed Sheeran and the rest of the pop contingent probably outdo them all.

This makes it pretty amusing that all the rock bombast in the world can't stop a chap from quailing before a producer with a jazz background, like Mendel did earlier this year. (Be assured, I'm not criticising him here: I'm including all of us non-jazzers in the 'fear of jazz' demographic…)

"If you're in the rock world, jazz seems to have a little bit of wizardry, whereas our rules and norms are quite a bit simpler," chuckles Mendel. "I was definitely a little nervous going into this album, because our producer Greg Kurstin is such a schooled jazz musician, but I was looking forward to it at the same time, because I want to collaborate with people and come out a better player at the end of it."

Mendel and Kurstin bonded despite their differing backgrounds, with the producer keen to give the bass a prominent spot in the music. "I would come in with my ideas and Greg would roll with those for a while, before saying 'Well, if you really want to make it good, try this!'" recalls Mendel. "I was coming off two records with [production legend] Butch Vig, who is very particular about timing and making sure that the bass isn't more complicated than it needs to be. His thing is about making the bass simple, solid and heavy without dragging things out: he does a lot of things in one take."

Concrete And Gold, on which Mendel and Grohl are joined by guitarist Chris Shiflett and drummer Taylor Hawkins, is a refined bit of work, loaded with Beatles and Queen-influenced textures and the odd acoustic ballad here and there. "I'm very pleased with it, it's one of my favourites," says Mendel. "I stretched out a bit on this one, and switched things up: we got a great sound that I'm really pleased with."

One of the songs, 'La Dee Da', begins with a slick fuzzed-up bass part, magicked up by Kurstin and his engineering team. "That's not a pedal, it's Greg using Logic," says the bassist. "We recorded the dry part in Pro Tools and then they had a second rig set up with Logic for tweaking things and adding effects. It's funny, because I just got a JHS Four Wheeler pedal, which is a distortion pedal that has a noise gate built in. The effect that Greg put on there more or less does the same thing. It's a great pedal: we just played 10 dates in Europe, and we didn't get a soundcheck for a single one of them, so I just plugged that pedal in and off we went."

The bass tone on the album, Logic-ed parts aside, has a bottom-heavy thud that suits the wall of guitars delivered by Grohl and Shiflett, thanks to a switch in strings. "I ended up playing flatwounds in the studio a lot – that was Greg's thing," explains Mendel. "I've always liked a live sound on the bass guitar, and I like the notes to ring out fully, but for this record I had a darker, more woody tone and actually it worked out great. Greg was really into that sound, and I came to like it too."

As is usually the case when big bands on a big budget go into big studios, there was an enviable choice of gear for Mendel to choose from. "In the studio there were six or seven

> **"OH MY GOSH, I WISH I COULD SLAP. ITS TIME IS BACK!"**

instruments," he recalls, "and for the first two or three songs you go through all six or seven, but then you end up picking the one and going with that, because it sounds the best. On this record I mostly used custom shop P-Basses that were made for me in the late 90s: they're basically what my signature bass turned into."

Ah yes, the Fender Nate Mendel Precision, available now at £949 and reviewed in these pages in 2013. Which of the instrument's specs is uniquely his, we ask? "It's a pretty typical P-Bass," he explains, "but I had different pickups put in, and a thicker bridge. The main thing was trying to get the shape of the neck right. In the batch of 1971 basses that mine came from, I think that they were trying to split the difference between the feel of a Precision neck and a Jazz neck. It's a little wider than a Jazz neck, which for me feels a little crowded."

Four years ago, our tester Mike Hine reckoned, "despite the simplicity of the passive circuitry, the Nate Mendel P-Bass is no one-trick pony. The Badass II bridge, larger and more robust than Fender bridges of old, coupled with the modern Seymour Duncan pickup, help pay tribute to the 71 Precision, while adding a refreshing, modern edge. By Mendel's own admission, the new technology makes this bass sound better than its archetype."

We relay this to Mendel and he says, "Obviously I'm biased, but if you're not going to buy a super high-end version of a Precision, or a vintage one, I think it's a good way to go. I love the cosmetics of it: the headstock is very bleached-out blonde and new-looking. I don't like relic-ed instruments: it just seems like cheating to me! I wanted to find the middle ground between a relic-ed bass and a bass that looks like it was just made last week."

Apart from his own Fenders, what else does he have lying around? "I'm mixing it up right now," he tells us. "I've been shopping a bit, because I haven't actually bought any new basses in a long time – I'm not much of a gear collector. I played guitar in my solo band for a long time, and then when I came back to bass I really started paying attention to tone and so on, which is why I've been shopping for basses lately."

For amps, Mendel has headed to our side of the pond, he tells us. "I use Ashdown BTA amps, the solid-state/tube hybrid ones. When I was growing up in the 70s I played Ampeg SVTs like everyone else: back then there wasn't much option. As soon as you could get $1200 together for a P-Bass and an SVT you were ready to go, right? But I don't tour with

my SVTs because they're old and finicky, so that's why I moved to Ashdown, which are readily available and the closest replica to that sound. I also have an awesome distortion pedal with Ashdown, the NM2."

Tasty gear all round, then. Does Mendel ever fancy a touch of amp-modelling, now that the tech is affordable and ubiquitous? "I just modelled my SVT sound with a Kemper, actually," he tells us. "We used the same cab, the same mic and the same control room as we record in to do it. I'm interested to know if it'll come out the same as the actual rig. I know that for guitars it's pretty spot-on, but getting the low end might be a little more difficult to replicate."

It's all a long way from Mendel's youth as a punk kid from Richland, Washington. "I just wanted to be in a band," he remembers, "and there was a guy I was hanging out with at the time who played guitar. I was listening to the *Ghost In The Machine* album by the Police at the time, and I was hugely into Sting, so when my friend suggested I should play bass I thought it sounded like an awesome idea."

It certainly was – so what was that first bass? "I got a Steinberger copy by Cort, because it was the 80s, and that was what you did when you were 13 back then, ha ha!" he laughs. "I got a little practice amp and we messed around a bit, but that band didn't last long. After that I got into punk rock and moved on to an Ibanez Roadstar and a black Kramer, a kind of Travis Bean-style bass. I joined this band called Christ On A Crutch and I bought a P-Bass for $200 from the singer. That's the one I modelled my signature Precision on."

And the rest is history. Has Mendel ever gone down into five-string territory? "No, ha ha!" he chuckles, before pausing to explain. "In our little camp, five-strings are pretty illegal. It's funny, because I totally understand the value of that fifth string, but it's just one of those lines that you don't cross."

We get it. It's the 'punk rules', right? "Probably, yeah. I know, I'm nearly 50 years old, and seriously, I'm still thinking like a teenager," he sighs. "Sorry man, some things are just built in."

He needn't worry: this is a recurring theme here at *BGM*. We often interview bassists, particularly Americans aged between around 35 and 50, who grew up on punk, and in that environment there were three unbreakable rules for the bass player. One, do not play more than four strings; two, do not play fretless; three, never – *ever* – play slap bass.

"Oh my gosh… I sort of wish I could slap," says Mendel. "Its time is back, I think. The

"IN OUR LITTLE CAMP, FIVE-STRING BASSES ARE PRETTY ILLEGAL. IT'S FUNNY, BECAUSE I TOTALLY UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF THAT FIFTH STRING, BUT IT'S JUST ONE OF THOSE LINES THAT YOU DON'T CROSS"

"I'M NEARLY 50 YEARS OLD, AND SERIOUSLY, I'M STILL THINKING LIKE A TEENAGER"

other day Taylor, Chris and I were jamming in the rehearsal room on an old U2 tune which has a slap part. It was fun, and the song was better for it. Maybe it's time to reassess. What's the opposite of the slap, when you pull up? A pop? Maybe I could do one of those here and there." If the next Foo Fighters album has some slap on it, you know where he got the idea.

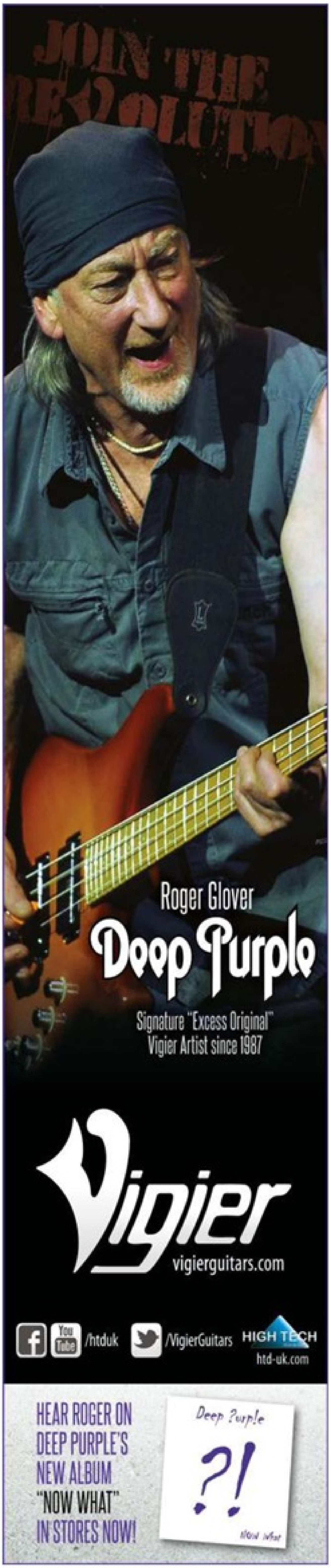
The Foos will be off on tour again in 2018: what basses will he be taking out with him? "On tour it's been a bit of a grab-bag recently," he tells us. "I've got a bunch of my P-Basses, a Jazz, an old Gibson Ripper, an Epiphone Jack Casady and a Rickenbacker, which I think must be a 4001.

"When I bought the Ricky I didn't know the difference between a 4001 and a 4003, but our drummer Taylor Hawkins called me from a guitar store and said 'Hey man, there's a beautiful white Rickenbacker here and you should come and get it'. He's been trying to get me to buy a Rickenbacker for ever. I'm curious to see which one I actually have!"

The Foo Fighters' music, designed for arenas as it is, must be too bottom-heavy for a Ricky, surely? "I plugged it in for a few songs in rehearsal recently, and it wasn't really appropriate for what we're doing," he nods, "but it still sounded awesome! I've never really sat down and figured out which basses sound best for which songs, so I'm really looking forward to doing that. I'll have some time to really think about it when we get together to rehearse for the next tour. I have a rack of old basses that I think might sound good. I'll try them out for different songs. Maybe 'Learn To Fly' will sound best with a Guild Starfire, who knows?"

He concludes: "Thankfully my bass tech Geoff Templeton is willing to nerd out on this as much as I am. He's going to fly out here in a couple of weeks and we're going to go through everything – pickups, strings, amps – and just dive into it for a couple of days. We're going to get real geeky with it." Sounds like *BGM*'s ideal day out – anyone fancy a trip to Washington…?

Concrete And Gold **is out now on RCA.**
Info: www.foofighters.com



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THE MASTER

If you play any form of funk bass, you owe Bootsy Collins – the legend who's played with James Brown and Parliament-Funkadelic, like you didn't know that already – a serious debt. Joel McIver meets the great man for tears of laughter, tears of sadness and enough groove to sink a battleship

We feature some bona fide bass legends in this magazine, for sure, but very few come with a pedigree quite like William Collins, or Bootsy as he's known to the entire bass-playing world (and significant chunks of it beyond). If you're familiar with the man and his playing, you'll know what a force of nature he is, epitomising the stagecraft of the era in which he grew up, and laying down the parameters of the slap and the pop for a generation of bassists.

Check for footage of Bootsy in full flow at any stage of his career, but especially in the 1970s and 80s, when his work with the psychedelic funk bands Parliament, Funkadelic and their many spinoffs lit up the rock landscape, and you'll be confronted by an explosive figure. Bootsy was, like his hero Jimi Hendrix and his contemporaries Sly Stone, Larry Graham and Verdine White, a musician who introduced an air of extrovert madness to his performances and recordings. There was, and is, literally no-one like him.

When *BGM* catches up with Bootsy for a chat about his new album, *World Wide Funk*, we're braced for an encounter that is as unhinged as his on-stage character would suggest. But no – the now 65-year-old legend is cool as a cucumber, mellow to the core and simply happy that we like his new tunes.

Mind you, after the career Bootsy's had, he'd need to be a pretty cool thinker just to get through the day: he started out in 1970 with James Brown, a bandleader for whom the phrase 'mad as a box of frogs' might well have been coined (see below for evidence). His next big band was the aforementioned P-Funk collective, whose influence has permeated the very DNA of hip-hop and modern soul, while his own Bootsy's Rubber Band took the brand even further.

Solo albums and collaborations with artists as diverse as Deee-Lite, Talking Heads, Bill Laswell, Herbie Hancock, Buddy Miles and his current guitar partner Buckethead have ensured Bootsy's legacy. Not to mention his Funk University, an online school where he teaches alongside tutors Les Claypool, Meshell Ndegeocello and Victor Wooten.

Can we cover all this in a single interview? Hardly – but if you ever get a chance to sit down with Bootsy and talk music, make sure you take it: the man is hilarious, unstoppable and also emotionally honest. A turning point comes when we mention the late P-Funk organist Bernie Worrell, Bootsy's lifeline comrade, who is celebrated on the new album with 'A Salute To Bernie', a cut on which he also plays. The loss of Worrell last year has left Bootsy deeply bereaved, although it says a lot that a few minutes later, he's telling James Brown anecdotes that have us both in stitches. What a guy.

Your new album is great, Bootsy.

Oh, man, thank you. That's so cool to hear. I think the hardest thing about the record was getting it started. You get to the point where you don't want to do the same things, and wind up with the same cats, so I tried to add some new energy – a little facelift, or 'funklift' if you will – just to keep things going. Once we started rolling with it, I realised that it was definitely the direction I wanted to go in.

How did you hook up with your co-producer Alissia Benveniste?

She sent me a few of her Youtube recordings and I saw that she called her band the Funketeers, so we started talking on

> "I REMEMBER WHEN THE BASS PLAYER WAS THE SCUM OF THE EARTH... NOW IT'S LIKE, 'YOU PLAY BASS? COOL!'"

© Getty

Facebook. The next thing you know it's like, 'We need to hook up, I want you to do some stuff on the record'. I found out she went to Berklee, which was cool because Buckethead and I had gone there to do a bass clinic and talk to the kids and give them a demonstration. We started doing stuff and it turned out great. She's definitely all up in the funk mix. She can pretty much do any of it.

You've also worked with Chris 'Freekbass' Sherman in the past.
Oh yeah – I could see an early version of me in him. We did everything we could do to help get him out there, because I knew once he got out there he was going to be *on*, you know. It all worked out really good.

Are you aware that you've influenced a huge number of bass players?
I look at it like everybody brings something to the table, and I have a signature style and sound – and everybody else is either developing that, or getting it together for themselves. I think it's a good thing. I don't think anybody owes me anything: we're all in this universal mixing pot, and you grab certain things out of it and you make it your own. That's the way I look at it.

Nowadays funk bass is faster and more technical than ever, it seems, at least judging by the bassists we interview in *BGM*.
They're taking it way, way, way beyond, and it's a good thing, because at one time I remember when a bass player was the scum of the earth, you know? You were the last one to get chosen in the band. Now it's like 'You play bass? Oh, cool!' It's the thing now.

Bootsy with the great, if slightly eccentric, James Brown back in 1970

When did that happen, from your perspective on it?

It was a gradual thing – it didn't happen all of a sudden. I think I was a part of the change, because Jimi Hendrix was my superhero, and I threw a little bit of his style into the bass. Now they've taken all of that and much more. They took what Larry Graham had done and tripled and quadrupled it and funked it up, and it's all just growing and growing. Nobody knows how far it can go, other than Victor Wooten! It's a good time for bass.

You were contemporaries with Jaco Pastorius. Did you know him?

I never met him. I did know of him, but I never had the chance to meet him. I got hip to him when he was doing his thing with Weather Report.

You're known for star-shaped basses. Is the five-pickup Warwick Space Bass still your main instrument?

That's the main puppy right there. They hooked me up, man. I got two of them that I take on the road, and one prototype that they made at first. It's heavier than the other two, so I keep that one at home. The two I take out have worked out really good: they're pretty happening.

What about amps?

I go into different amps. On the new album I used my original Alembic preamps and Jonas Hellborg preamps, then Mesa Boogie, Hughes & Kettner and Crown amps, with JBL speakers. I'm also talking right now to Funktion-One, a company in the UK that makes 32" speakers. They do a lot of electronic music and DJs and all that stuff. I'm thinking about having 32s on my low end instead of the 18s. We went over there and they showed us a whole system for the mids, the highs, the ultra highs and the sub lows – we're talking about putting together the whole thing. It's incredible, man – you walk in and your pants start waving. It shakes everything! I'm really looking forward to getting into that in 2018.

Do you ever take any of your old gear out on the road?

I don't take the original 1975 Star Bass out no more, because in 1998 we flew over to

© Michael Weintrob

Europe and when we got there, the airline couldn't find my bass. It took two weeks to get it back! Bernie Worrell knew this one chick that worked at the airline, so he called her up and asked her if she could go down and look for it, because she knew what the bass and the case looked like. She went down and looked for it, and she said that it was just sitting over in a corner by itself. Who knows how long it would have stayed there? So after that happened I was like, okay, I got to get a new bass. That one had been stolen before, back in the early days when I first got it made, so I wasn't having anyone steal it again! It's hanging on the wall in my meditation room here, safe and sound. The Warwick bass is on patrol now.

Which other basses do you still have?
The Funkadelic bass that I played is in the Hall Of Fame, but I still have a ton of my old basses. You remember the 1958 Ampeg with the holes? I got that one, fretless. Victor Wooten came up and broke that in. Oh man, he killed that sucker! We recorded a whole 60 minutes of Victor just playing that bass non-stop. It was incredible. It's still got the same strings that came on it, these old flatwounds. You don't get that sound now, because everyone wants a brighter, poppier sound. Man, I played that sucker the other day and I was like 'Wow!' And then I got this Vox bass – remember those old hollow-bodied ones? It's like a Gibson, but with a single cut. It's got fuzz on it, and sustain, with the little buttons you can push. I played that the other day too. I'm re-finding myself, because those are the basses that I started off with. Getting back to that stuff was a great feeling, and it's a great feeling on this record too, to get back to some bass-lines. That was important to me: we've taken it way beyond what a bass player is, which is cool, but I wanted to get back to playing a bass-line.

It was great to see a track dedicated to the late Bernie Worrell on your new album.
What I had to say, I had to put it on record, because you don't know what to do with that kind of loss. We did so many things together – so many things – and most of it, people haven't even heard. There was some kind of connection between us. You know when you use GPS to work out how to get somewhere from over here? We kinda had that with each other from day one, the first time we started playing together.

He always came across as more introverted than you.
I was always a pretty good talker: I would be on the street, rapping with the fellows, you know, so I was always pretty good with that. A lot of people would make fun of Bernie under their breath, because he couldn't do interviews, and stuff like that which seemed easy to do. He could play all the keyboards in the world, though, and I always knew that whatever he needed to say, he'd do it on a keyboard. That was why his playing sounded so real, because it was stuff that we were all going through. I could see Bernie trying to explain things to people, and I'd say 'If only he had his keyboard!' Ha ha!

Do you look back fondly at the early part of your career?
Coming up at that time was the best, because we had a chance to experience the free love and the peace. Now, getting a chance to share that again is what I love. Those good vibes, man. Everything is a choice: you can share the good vibes, or you can get your business hat on and start sharing all of that mess. We weren't used to business back then: all we wanted to do was play, especially in the era we were coming up in, which was about playing and getting a few girls and having a good time. It all turned into business, though, and since we didn't know nothing about business, we kinda freaked out, ha ha! We all went a little crazy...

The two hours on stage, communing with your fans, never goes away though – right?
Yeah. That's all you have to hold onto, plus the time you have together, even if it ain't with the whole group. Bernie would come to my house just to get away from everything. All he wanted to do was just walk by himself, and to be allowed his space. I guess every person would want that, but he really *needed* it, because he

"A LOT OF PEOPLE WOULD MAKE FUN OF BERNIE WORRELL UNDER THEIR BREATH, BECAUSE HE COULDN'T DO INTERVIEWS, AND STUFF LIKE THAT WHICH SEEMED EASY TO DO. HE COULD PLAY ALL THE KEYBOARDS IN THE WORLD, THOUGH, AND I ALWAYS KNEW THAT WHATEVER HE NEEDED TO SAY, HE'D DO IT ON A KEYBOARD"

WHAT'S BOOTSY DOIN'?
WE ASKED BOOTSY TO REVEAL THE CONTENTS OF HIS PEDALBOARD. DEEP BREATH...

Xotic Robotalk envelope filter
Mu-FX Tru-Tron 3X envelope filter
Darkglass Duality fuzz
DOD Thrash Master distortion
EHX POG 2
Eventide PitchFactor harmonizer
Boss RE-20 Space Echo
Original Morley Fuzz
New Morley Fuzz Wah
Original Mu-Tron 3 envelope filter
Original EHX Big Muff
EHX Metal Muff
Fuchs Plush Tube Delay
Zvex Woolly Mammoth fuzz
Red Witch Distortion
Pigtronix Mothership analogue synth
Maestro Rhythm'N'Sound multieffects
Eventide H9 multieffects
Mu-FX Phasor
Amptweaker Fat Metal Pro overdrive
Blackstar Metal distortion
Digitech Bass Whammy
Boss Envelope Filter

EFFECTS GURU STEVE LAWSON SAYS...
"In the conversation about pedals, Bootsy has long been way more than just 'the guy who popularised the Mu-Tron', and this list gives us an insight into just how exacting his tonal needs are. Other than the H9, all these are pedals that do specific things exceptionally well. The range of options he has for fuzz/overdrive and envelope filters is the result of decades spent refining sounds for particular songs: this is a long way beyond just the swag-bag of a legend wandering round the NAMM Show filling up on freebies. The mix of classic pedals (Mu-Tron, Morley Fuzz, Space Echo) with bang up-to-date modern masters (Darkglass Duality, Redwitch Distortion, Pigtronix Mothership) reveals the mind of a musician in touch with his legacy but unwilling to rest on the thing that made him famous 40 years ago. This is a testament to his signature sound, but with a desire for specific tonal control that reveals a master producer's understanding of funk and experimental bass sounds."

was pure genius. He handled it the best that he could, for a good while. I couldn't do enough for him, I wish I could have done more. You don't get friends and musicians like that, it just doesn't happen. I don't take it lightly. When you start talking about him, it's way under the skin, you know? It's like he's in my skin; something you can't get rid of, and you don't want to get rid of it. I know he's physically gone, but I still feel him. His setup is still down in the Bootcave, and for me, he's still there. He's still there. If I can do anything for him now, it's to remind people that Bernie was the key to the mothership.

I have to ask this question. What was James Brown like?

Oh! *[bursts out laughing]* Oh man... he was that guy, you know. He was definitely *that* guy! He was a hell of a cat. He worked day in and day out, and you wouldn't understand why he did the things he did, because he just felt that he was by himself. I never understood that, until I got into having to take care of business of my own. When I was with him, he kept me real close, to show me things, as if he knew that I was going to be out there myself one day. He showed me as much as he could, without telling me anything. He had me flying on the jet with him, telling me that he'd called the radio stations and had them play his songs. He'd go there personally, and he'd take me with him to do this. Not only did I play the shows, he wanted me to see him taking care of business, for some unknown reason. He was hard core, man. Hard core.

Wasn't he famously stingy with money?

We didn't get hit as hard as his first band, because he couldn't threaten us with taking our money. We were used to getting no money no way, ha ha ha! Man, I've seen some stuff... with James, he would always try to break you down. Any time that you knew you'd played a great gig, and the people were loving it, he'd call you into his dressing room and say *[adopts sarcastic, guttural tone]* 'Haaargh! You just ain't on it. You just ain't on the one'. I'd be like, 'What? We ain't on the one?' He'd do crazy stuff. He called in the sax player once and told him to throw his horn away because he wasn't playing nothing but trash. And he was serious. It got to the point where I had to figure out whether this mother was crazy or if he was just messing with us.

And which was it?

I determined that he was both of them. He was crazy *and* he was messing with us! But I gotta say, him telling us that we weren't on the one and we weren't happening, it made me want to practise more. He knew what he was doing. You know how sensitive musicians are. That was the biggest letdown, because I was a kid wanting to please Mr Brown and do the best job – and then he called me in the room and told me that. I'm like, 'Man, what can I do?' He told me one time, 'Son, y'all the greatest band in the world, but you just can't play'. Ha ha! And the bad thing about it was that he was serious! Couldn't nobody laugh about it at the time, because this was Mr. Brown talking, you know. But when we saw how stupid this stuff was that he was doing, we just started cracking up any time he would say something like 'Errrgh! You're not on it, son'. We would die laughing.

What was his reaction to being laughed at?

Man, it worked because he stopped calling us in the dressing room. We knew we had it, and we said, 'Okay, that's what that was all about'. But before that, man, he was killing us with all that 'Y'all ain't on it'. He was sweating profusely, his knees were bleeding – we just wore him out, and he would *still* call us in and tell us it wasn't happening. And then, when you went out there and messed up, and the show wasn't really good, we'd all go back to the dressing room with our heads down because we'd had a crappy night. Sometimes you just have crappy nights, you know. He would call us in there and he'd be laughing, and he'd say 'Haaargh! You're killing it! Son, you're killing it!' When he did that, that's when I really knew that this mother was *gone*. He was on another planet. Ha ha!

Thanks for sharing, Bootsy. You've had a career like no other.

All this happened for real, man, for real. You couldn't make nothing like that up...

World Wide Funk is out now on Mascot Records.
Info: www.bootsycollins.com

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DAVID GILMOUR
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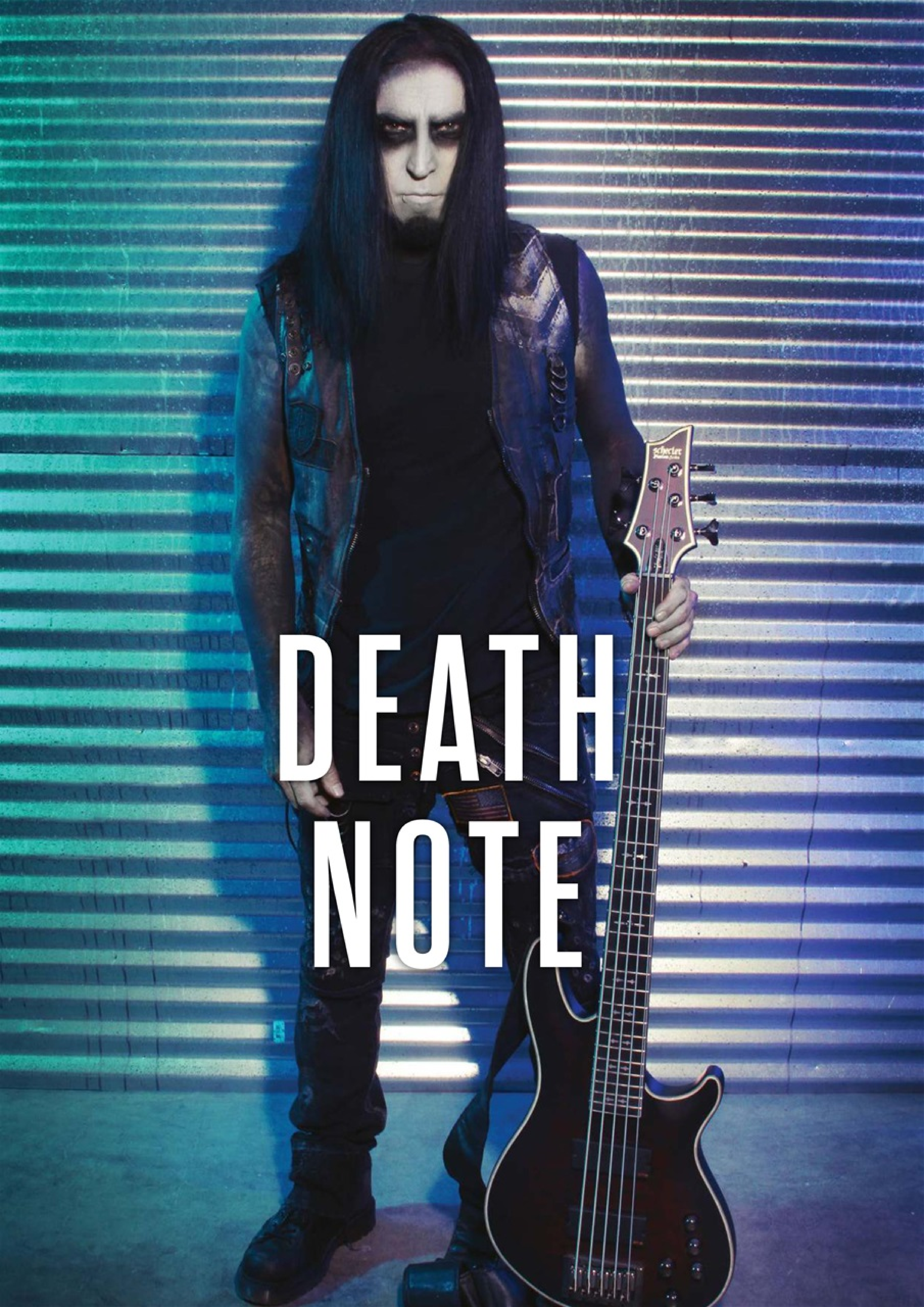

DEATH NOTE

Scared? You should be! Troy Doebbler, bassist for shock-rockers Wednesday 13, meets Hywel Davies

Horror and heavy metal go together like peas and carrots, but with a little more emphasis on blood and gore than nutritional content. Goth-punk singer-songwriter Wednesday 13 (Joseph Poole to his accountant) wears his horror influences unapologetically on his blackened sleeves, not showing a single sign of letting up after 25 years of making heavy music and terrifying concerned parents. Bassist Troy Doebbler has been playing for Wednesday since 2011, first appearing on the *Calling All Corpses* album. Let's hear his take on their newest one, *Condolences*.

"We were certainly leaning towards more of a metallic take on the music since the last album, *Monsters Of The Universe*," says the bassist. "Roman [Surman, guitar], Kyle [Castronovo, drums], Jake [Tankersley, guitar] and I all come from metal backgrounds, so being able to utilise the thing we're good at was great. Wednesday had been listening to that stuff as well, and we would always bounce back and forth between stuff like Machine Head and Gojira. We were capable of doing it and so we said, 'Well shit, why not?'"

In his headbanging element, Doebbler had the chance to really let loose. What are his favourite moments from the record, we ask? "I really like the song 'Lonesome Road To Hell', just because I get to play around on it a little bit. It's not too technical, but it's got some flavourful runs that add a little bit of fun to my playing. When I was sitting down and writing some of the parts on that, I could've easily gone straight with it, but the song gave me plenty of breathing room without stepping on the vocals or the guitar parts. So, I thought I might as well add a little bit of pizzazz and spice it up."

Doebbler is a bassist to the bone, having been playing since the age of 16. At first, the role wasn't so much consciously made as simply handed off to him, as he explains. "It really was just that! Some friends of mine were starting a band and they needed a bass player, so I said I'd do it. Another friend of mine had a bass and I asked him, 'Dude, I think I'm going to try and do this, could I borrow your bass?' And straight away I fell in love with it. It just felt right, you know? I dabbled with guitar, but I sucked at it horribly, so I decided to focus on being a bass player and seeing where it led me."

His gut instinct worked out: he's now an endorsee of Schecter Guitars. He hints, on the downlow, that some thought has already been put into a potential signature model, though this is not confirmed yet. A bass for metalheads by metalheads, we're sure... "It would be pretty close to the Model-T Session I'm playing now," he confirms. "I love the neck, I love the pickups, and I also love the simplicity. Sometimes a lot of new basses have too many freakin' knobs, man. Next there'll be a digital readout or a touchscreen or some shit. Just give me a basic badass bass that's made out of good wood, good electronics and a great fretboard. Active pickups would definitely be in there too. When you're playing actives, you get a bite and a rumble that you can't get from passives. Also, I would love it all stealthed out with a matte black finish; keep it metal as fuck!"

What nuggets of advice can he share with us about the fundamentals of metal bass playing? "First of all, make sure you're playing with your drummer and that you're tight as hell. That's the most important thing. But most of all, be what you're supposed to be.

"You're the wall behind it all, so own that shit and make it yours!"

***Condolences* is out now via Nuclear Blast.**
Info: www.officialwednesday13.com

MINNESOTA KICKS

Back with a new album, 1969, former Prince sidekick Andre Cymone tells Simon Price about the bassists who shaped him, a youth spent stealing and smashing instruments, going guitar-shopping with the Purple One, and his essential kit

Look at any footage or photographs of Prince and his band from 1978-81, and Andre Cymone is right there next to him, somehow managing to look like the second-coolest man in Minneapolis despite wearing, more often than not, a pair of see-through plastic trousers. Born Andre Simon Anderson in 1958, Cymone was always more than merely a hired yes-man in Prince's retinue. He and Prince were childhood friends, even living together for a period, and formed their first band, Grand Central, before the shorter fella's career took off. Cymone's bass style proved an important factor in shaping the 'Minneapolis Sound', and he influenced the Prince phenomenon in all manner of unseen ways.

For example, it's widely known – though not acknowledged on the credits – that Cymone wrote the song that became 'Do Me Baby', one of Prince's biggest ballads. (And the curvy white 'cloud' guitar Prince plays in *Purple Rain*? That was originally Andre's, too.) Between the *Dirty Mind* and *Controversy* albums, Cymone quit the Prince set-up to become a solo artist, releasing three albums, before switching his attention to production, working with artists including Adam Ant, Lipps Inc, Tom Jones, Evelyn 'Champagne' King, Jermaine Stewart, Tiffany and Jody Watley.

After a 28-year break from recording, Cymone released a comeback album called *The Stone* in 2014, and has followed it with this year's *1969*, an amiable pop-rock romp with a political edge, drawing comparisons between Trump's America and the turmoil of the late 60s. Taking it easy in London after a short tour with Prince's old band, the New Power Generation, he answers our questions.

How would you describe your bass style, Andre?
Freeform. Artistic. When I first started playing bass, what I did – because I always wanted to be unique – was that I learned sax solos on the bass. It was a world of strategising, and we were always trying to find a way back then to be different from everybody else, so my thing was like, if I learn sax solos on the bass, that's gonna give me a different style. So that was my approach.

When did you start playing bass?
When I was like, three! My father was a bass player. He had an upright bass, so literally I would climb on a stool and learn James Brown songs. And I broke it. I don't know if that's how my parents got divorced, but from what I hear, my father came home early, and I was playing James Brown, and I heard the door, and then – smash! And he gave me the worst whupping, because it broke. And him and my mom got into an argument, and next thing I knew, we were moving. So who knows?

Do you ever play a five- or six-string bass?
No. I think I can do whatever I need to do with four strings. I know people who play the five-string who are really good, like Sonny Thompson from NPG, who is the most phenomenal bass player. I don't say that lightly, because I always thought I was the best player until I heard Stanley Clarke – and then I was like, you know what? There's somebody who's better than me, so I'm gonna start playing other instruments! Sonny Thompson plays the five-string and he kills it, but for the style that I want, I don't need five. I like four-strings. I like what that does.

What's the secret of great bass playing?
Practice. Practice. And more practice. The secret to playing bass well is not to play one style. Practise other styles. Practise rock, practise funk definitely, practise jazz… because if you wanna be good at something, you might wanna understand what else is out there, unless it's just a hobby. If you're doing it for real, you've gotta know all of it, because you might get called to do a gig that's just about anything.

What was your first bass?
My first bass was a Jazz. I found it just sitting there in someone's living room. The door was open [laughs] – and that was my first bass. It was funny because I sort of… took it. And then I lost that same bass because after a gig, I set it outside my door, and forgot it when I

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carried all our stuff outside, and when I went back the next day, it was gone. Karma! It's amazing. It's there, then it's gone.

What's been your favourite bass to date?
The bass that's on a lot of the original records, such as the Time records, I still have it. It's also a Jazz bass. All the early pictures of me with Prince, where I'm wearing the clear pants, I've got that bass. I have black nylon strings now, that's the only difference. For a while I pasted on some leopard print, but I took that off. We got it a long time ago. Me and Prince used to go to this guitar shop called Knut Koupee in Minneapolis that they used to kick us out of, at first, because we were kids. They'd say 'You guys don't have any money – get out!' And it's true that we couldn't afford anything, but eventually they let us play, because they'd say 'You guys are good!' So they let us sort of jam. And when we finally got some money, we went in there and Prince bought that Hohner Telecaster that he played on everything, and I bought the Jazz – even though he told a different story, and I hate to say he was wrong. The store isn't around any more, but I think the guys are.

What other gear do you use?
I've never endorsed anything, but I like Ampeg amps, the SVT ones, because they sound amazing. I also do a combination with Marshall bottoms, and I used to do a Mesa/Boogie head. I really don't do that much effects on bass. I have this one fuzz pedal, I think it's a Digitech, and a Zvex Octane fuzz octaver.

Who are your bass heroes?
I don't really have that many, but Larry Graham, definitely, and Stanley Clarke, because he was the one who made me decide maybe I should start playing a little more guitar [laughs]. I was a little cocky, and always took myself a little too serious. We used to do Battles Of The Bands back when we were starting out in Minneapolis, and you couldn't tell me I wasn't better than everybody. I was that cocky. I would literally go up to people and say 'You ain't shit. I could kill you on bass'. And sometimes it helps if you take yourself a little too serious, because nobody else will. But I didn't know that many bass players when I was first starting. I didn't even know that Larry Graham played with his thumb, because I thought I was creating something new by doing that, until someone said 'Oh, Larry Graham plays like that'. I went to see him play, to see if he played like that, and sure enough...

Who's the greatest bass player that ever lived, for you?
I dunno if this is some kind of hometown bias, but I'm gonna say Sonny Thompson. We were in Rotterdam, with the NPG, and we played at this club called Birds, just jamming. I was on guitar, and he did this bass solo and it started out like it was gonna be bad, because he changed the time, but he completely flipped the time signature. And I was just looking at him, shocked. It blew me away. Afterwards I said to him, 'Man, that was the most amazing bass solo I ever heard'.

Name a song with a great bass tone.
I don't know if it's Larry Graham, it might be Rustee Allen, but some of the early Sly & The Family Stone records, like 'Skin I'm In', there's something about the bass tone they had back then. It had this almost rubbery aspect, like a rubber band, but it also had bottom.

Have you ever tried to recreate it, and figure out how it was done?
Oh, are you kidding me? Absolutely! Every time I go in the studio, I try and achieve that. I guess it's whatever kind of compressors they used. I'm not the most technical kind of person in the studio. I have to trust engineers who know what they're doing. The guy I did the last album with, he knew about that stuff – he'd recorded with Joe Cocker. It's the closest I'm probably ever gonna get!

1969 is out now on Blindtango. Info: www.andrecymone.com. Photo shoot: Jimi Hendrix's flat at 23 Brook Street, London. Thanks to handelhendrix.org.

HADRIEN'S WALL (OF SOUND)

Bassist extraordinaire Hadrien Feraud updates us on his low-frequency lifestyle

When you've shared stages with legends like John McLaughlin, Chick Corea, Dominique Di Piazza and Billy Cobham, where do you go next? We caught up with funky Frenchman Hadrien Feraud – a man who is almost always up to something worth writing about.

Tell us about some of your current endorsements, Hadrien.
Right now I have two main endorsements, which are Ken Smith basses and Mayones. Those are the two instruments I use exclusively, depending on the style. I use the Ken Smith for the more jazzy things. The Mayones is a more Fender type of bass, it can fit everywhere but I guess I'll take it to pop gigs or something that's more mainstream.

What are you up to at the moment?
I'm doing a few things on and off. I've played with artists such as Hiromi lately, subbing for Anthony Jackson, and people like Dean Brown, Lee Ritenour and the Zawinul Legacy Band. I've also recorded some new projects in France with some great musicians from there. Richard Bona is going to be producing that project, so that's interesting. And besides, I'm always recording new music for myself and trying to get on with my own music.

Do you favour a particular string configuration?
I started on four-string basses and stayed with them for the first seven years of my bass-playing life. And then when I started working very intensely on improvisation, modes and scales, I had a much wider range with a five-string. I was also always attracted to the lower end that the low B-string brings. Despite what conservative musicians say about how the four-string is the only 'real' bass, I think actually a five-string with the low B is more of a bass. It's logical. I feel less limited than with a four-string. I love playing four-strings every now and then, they're great, but my thing is the five with the low B.

Strapp

“THE SECRET OF BEING GOOD AT ANYTHING IN LIFE, IN GENERAL, IS THAT WHATEVER YOU PRACTISE, YOU HAVE TO PRACTISE IT THE RIGHT WAY”

Do you enjoy slapping?
I never had a passion for it, and you can hear that because I'm not really great at it. There's also a dimension where, I think, slap is a little bit dated. But at the same time, I'll be honest, I'm rationalising because I'm not good at it, so there's a little bit of that. Marcus Miller is amazing and he's not getting too dated because he has a sound that's pretty much defined the new sound of slap, along with Victor Wooten. I'd like to be better at slap one day. I work on it every now and then, but it's not natural for me.

What, for you, is the secret of playing bass well?
Oh well, there's no secret. The secret of being good at anything in life in general is that whatever you practise, you have to practise it the right way. Usually whatever you practise you're going to get good at. So that's the only secret. First of all, if you want to be a good bass player, listen to the bass players who made history, but also listen to a lot of music which doesn't include bass, like classical music. You need to absorb a lot of music.

What about soloing?
If you want to get better at soloing on bass, well, don't listen to bass players, listen to piano, and listen to solo instruments. To me, what's interesting is really the music: I happen to be using a bass to make music, but I could have played anything else. I just liked the sound of the bass and I like being a bass player. I guess I'm known for doing all these crazy solos, which are actually not my favourite thing. My favourite thing is playing a bass-line of a song.

Who were your influences on bass in the early days?
The older guys who made me grow, like Jaco because he was a spiritual father for many of us. He was the one who made me want to be a musician, literally. Besides Jaco there was Victor Bailey and then there was Christian McBride. Then I discovered Anthony Jackson – he is amazing. Later on, I discovered Matt Garrison, who was an amazing inspiration, as well as Dominic Di Piazza. And then there are other guys that I really loved as well, like Gary Willis, Jeff Berlin and Étienne M'Bappé.

Info: www.hadrienferaud.info

HEADING EAST

Mike Brooks catches up with the debonair bass giant Nathan East during his recent stint in London with Eric Clapton

When your debut solo album hits the ground running, and continues that run for well over a year, racking up four weeks at the top of the US jazz charts and continually accumulating accolades, it's fair to say you should feel overjoyed at a job well done. But how do you repeat that success? The man charged with such a task is Nathan East, Mr Cool himself.

"After all these years, I've learned not to expect anything – so you become pleasantly surprised if there's any degree of success," he says of his self-titled first album's runaway performance on its release in 2014. "It's been amazing: I have to credit Yamaha Entertainment Group for really getting behind it and trying to shoot it out of a cannon. And they have a very nice-sized cannon, I must say! I'm really grateful that I'm with their label, and it makes total sense having been with the company for almost 40 years as an endorsee. There was pressure to come up with the second album, *Reverence*, but I could feel that we were in good territory again."

East's relaxed nature is obvious: as he explains, even when he's playing with Eric Clapton at the Royal Albert Hall, it feels as if he's playing with friends. "We rehearsed at Cranleigh Arts Centre and it felt like they were the most enjoyable rehearsals I've ever experienced. When we moved to the RAH, it felt like the same thing, but with an audience watching us. Our relationship with Eric's audience is a relationship that has grown: there's no expectation for the crowd to get up and scream any more. They know they're going to get classics like 'Wonderful Tonight' and 'Layla', and they know they're in the presence of rock'n'roll royalty. I know that too!"

Watching the show on the opening night, the camaraderie within the band is obvious – and the rhythm section enjoy moments where they resemble a pair of naughty schoolboys. "I'd need a chiropractor if I had to turn around every time Steve [Gadd, drums] does a brilliant move, or tries to catch me out on a fill," he chuckles. "He's the finest, most mature musician, and his instincts are the best of just about anyone you could ever play with. He's like a tennis or squash player: it's about the economics of movement, economy of energy, that's the wisdom of a guy like Steve Gadd."

Not that East takes the job of holding down the bottom end in Clapton's band lightly, as he explains. "It's one of the highest honours that you can imagine in terms of the quality of the music, the importance of the music and the feeling of family. It's a very cool place to be, and at every stage, it's been a thrill."

As a bassist with an extensive collection of musical hats, so to speak, East is well versed in what is required from the bass chair for Clapton's show, a relationship that goes back to 1983. "You become the foundation and the support for the 'house', the complete opposite of being flash," he says. "Sometimes I try to be invisible, just because it's a whole other level of penetration to the hearts that are listening to it. I provide the room for Eric to do his thing, so he doesn't have to worry about the rhythm section impeding his voice."

It turns out that Clapton is always listening to his bassman. "After the show the other night, he asked me to turn up and be louder than him! He wants to hear it and feel it. I'm only using one cabinet on stage, a 4x10, and on shows like this, you're totally in the hands of the sound engineer. In theory, I could lose the amp completely, because what you don't want in the Royal Albert Hall is massive amounts of volume coming off the stage. However, Eric said 'Crank it!', so..."

You may know that East is part of an online teaching faculty that includes some of the biggest names in music and which can be found at www.artistworks.com. Interested in being taught by Nathan East? Read on! "I'm one of 40 faculty members and instructors, using a patented technology where students send in videos and you send responses back and forth. People had always asked me if I taught, and I felt bad not being able to accommodate them, but this felt like a way to get the ball rolling. I've been in the faculty for six years, and it's grown so much. For bass, I think it's important to share all the wisdom, and I really try to articulate the importance of everything about a note – where you strike it, how you strike it, pickup placement, constantly upgrading how you play for the room and the gig. Those are things you don't really learn at Berklee and in the academic side of things. I have regular ongoing input, and the progression is constant."

Reverence entered the charts at number one in the US and, among other esteemed guests, features the great Earth Wind & Fire bassist Verdine White, as well as EWF singer Philip Bailey. "We've been friends for years," he says. "They're icons and superstars, so it's humbling to be able to pick up the phone and say 'Hey, what are you doing on Tuesday? Would you like to come down to the studio?' Verdine had a white bass, and that's why I got a white bass too: I wanted to be him when I was starting out. I saw EWF in 1971 in San Diego, and my jaw dropped."

"AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, I'VE LEARNED NOT TO EXPECT ANYTHING"

You may have seen Nathan's son Noah working with his father on several shows – an enlightening experience for East Senior, by all accounts. "Oh my goodness, it's everything," says our man. "In life, you have highlights – and then there's playing music with your son. I remember when he was five, I realised he had perfect pitch: he has incredible ears where he can literally hear something and play it immediately. We jam together before we go to bed at night, I'm on the upright bass. It's like jamming with an old man. There really is nothing better: I don't take it for granted and it fills my heart with joy."

***Reverence* is out now on Yamaha Entertainment Group. Info: www.nathaneast.com.**

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FAST CARR

ABC and Belinda Carlisle bassist Andy Carr has covered many musical miles – and that doesn't look like changing any time soon

Interview: Mike Brooks

2017 has been exceptionally busy for you, Andy… fill us in!
It's been an amazing year, with trips to LA with ABC and Japan with Belinda Carlisle earlier in the year, followed by festivals with ABC throughout the summer. I played in the house band for Let's Rock London, playing 35 minute sets for seven artists. That was a lot of music to digest! There were some gigs and TV work with Nick Heyward, promoting his *Woodland Echoes* album, and a show with the Stax legend William Bell as well. I feel very lucky that everything slotted together!

ABC sounds like a busy gig?
It is! In April, I played at the Royal Albert Hall with ABC with a full symphony orchestra: it's possibly my favourite show to date. I've been playing with them for 13 years, and it's great to have such an up-front position in the overall sound of the band. ABC's *XYZ* Greatest Hits tour starts in November, and before that, I'm performing on Belinda Carlisle's 30th Anniversary tour in October.

Your big break came in 1988 after a chance meeting with Bruce Dickinson.
I turned up for an audition and I knew I was onto something, because loads of up-and-coming bass players were there. I walked into the rehearsal room and the first person I saw was Bruce! It was for a band called Three Rivers and his cousin played drums. Fortunately, I got the job and a year later Bruce asked me to play on the *Nightmare On Elm Street 4* soundtrack in Battery Studios. That led to being asked to play on his first solo album, *Tattooed Millionaire*, followed by a world tour promoting the record.

Which bass players do you admire?
Steve Harris, Cliff Williams, Geddy Lee and Adam Clayton were all big influences early on. Then of course there was Jaco, especially his work with Joni Mitchell. I'd never heard a bass guitar played so creatively, but he always supported the melody and the song, which is so important. That led to discovering James Jamerson and Pino Palladino. I've often had to reproduce Pino's recorded bass-lines live, including recently with Nick Heyward. It's always a challenge because of his unique approach and feel.

Do you have any preferences in terms of equipment and instruments?
It's all about amp tone and the speed of the speakers for me. I need a fast response, because I don't want any latency so that I have full control over timing. I use IEMs a lot now, but I still have cabinets on stage for air movement. I bought an Avalon U5 preamp which changed my live sound completely and gives me a studio-quality DI sound at live gigs. I've been very impressed with various Gallien-Krueger gear I've used on the road: I recently secured an artist deal with them. Bass-wise, I used Warwicks in the early 90s, but I've moved towards Fender instruments since then. I have a few Jazz basses, including a US Standard which is my go-to studio bass, as well as a Music Man Stingray.

How did you get into sessions?
I started out wanting to be in an original band that could make it. I didn't really aspire to be a session musician: it happened organically. I was very hard on myself when I practised and really worked on my technique, scales and exercises. I had no real point of reference other than trying to hear the bass in records, as back then, there was no Youtube analysis! I hated buzzes and string noise, until I bought the *Standing In The Shadows Of Motown* book. If you panned the accompanying tape to one side, you could hear some of the world's greatest bassists playing on their own. It was the first time I'd heard soloed bass and their performances had all of those nuances, but then I realised it was integral to the feel. I'm still very much on a learning journey and I still try to progress and push myself forward.

Info: www.andycarrbass.co.uk

GEAR REVIEWS

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass speakers and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's particularly useful for bassists, and we'll test recording equipment and general accessories every now and then as well, but generally speaking, this zone is for bass-specific gear.

We take the ratings that we give each item very seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers from all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your investigation, we'll say so; if it's flawed in some way, we won't hold back from making that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way and our conclusions are entirely independent of the views of manufacturers, musicians and distributors.

When you read about a bass-related product here, you know you're getting a sensible, balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

Right, that's enough from me. Remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*

Joel McIver, editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

FENDER
Jaco Pastorius Signature Jazz

Thirty years after Jaco's passing, the legend continues to grow. Fender's tribute to the 'Bass Of Doom' is naturally a fretless Jazz — but as Mike Brooks discovers, signature models carry their own weight of expectation

Guitar Guitar
www.guitarguitar.co.uk

£2159

Aside from Hofner and Paul McCartney, is there a more indelible bass association than Jaco Pastorius and his beloved 'Bass Of Doom'? We think not, so naturally we were rather keen to run the rule over this particular instrument from the Fender Artist Signature range. While a fretless Jazz is not a particularly rare breed, when it's connected to a bassist as iconic as Jaco, we sit up and take notice. Straight from its hardshell case, it certainly looks the part – so what has it got to offer?

Build Quality

The Jaco Jazz certainly feels solid and well assembled, as any Jazz should, but there is a feeling that this particular model has had a little extra time and care spent on it, reflected by the pricetag. In terms

of features, there is enough to appeal to both Jaco fans and those simply looking for a great fretless. The reverse vintage tuners and a strap button on the rear of the headstock are complemented by Jaco's engraved signature on the four-bolt neckplate, and the nitrocellulose lacquered, three-colour sunburst alder body, which gives the bass a played-in feel from the outset.

Strangely, the bass comes fitted with flatwound strings, possibly to save the fingerboard from string wear before it is sold – but as we all know, if you're looking for a little of the Jaco magic, you really need to be stringing this bass with steel roundwounds. The urethane-coated pau ferro fingerboard is delightfully smooth to the touch, while the slim Jazz neck's 38mm nut width, 19mm string spacing and exceptional setup make this an extremely playable bass. Navigation

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £2159
Made In | USA
Colour | 3-colour sunburst
Body | Alder
Neck | Maple, 34" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt on, four bolt attachment
Nut Width | 38mm
Fingerboard | Pau ferro
Frets | 20
Pickups | 2 x Fender American Vintage single-coil pickups
Electronics | Passive
Controls | 2 x volume, master tone
Hardware | Chrome hardware, Fender American Vintage reverse elephant ear machine heads, Fender American Vintage bridge
Weight | 4.1 kg
Case/gig bag included | Hardshell case
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A solid performer in every respect and a suitable tribute to the master
Minus | Not cheap, but feel the quality
Overall | A great instrument with much going for it. It won't turn you into Jaco, but you can have a lot of fun trying!

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

isn't too much of a problem, as this is a lined fretless with aged position markers on the front and side of the neck. Interestingly, the area around the lower horn has been sprayed differently to replicate an aged Jazz whose scratchplate has been removed for some time. A nice touch.

There is some headstock bias, but it's nothing to worry about once the Jazz is placed on a strap: wearing the bass feels very comfortable and familiar. The C-shaped neck profile and nitro neck finish make for a very smooth, sleek playing experience, while the hardware is generally of a very high standard: both the vintage tuners and knurled controls (volume, volume and master tone) turn very smoothly. The standard, but vintage-style, bridge is simply what it is without any fuss or furore. The neck pocket is tight and well-seated and overall, this feels like a substantial but very pleasing bass to play by anyone's standards.

Sounds And Playability

Acoustically, this bass is very responsive: holding it against your body illustrates just how resonant it is. Without the actual 'Bass Of Doom' to compare it against (as if!), it is hard to know how closely this bass is actually modelled on the legend, but if this one is any indication, then the original was a fabulous beast to play.

Plugging in, the passive tone is remarkably vibrant, with a smooth bass response, a fundamentally pronounced midrange and an articulate top end. Soloing each pickup produces the expected response from each unit, but where a fretted instrument has a definite tone based on how the string performs, with a fretless, far more nuances can be obtained. These are based on how you attack the string, fret a note, where the note is played, how you fret the note and for how long – all of which can have a subtle effect on the tone produced. Thankfully, this bass addresses all of those elements with ease. It's a simple instrument at heart, but the joy of its simplicity is its ability to convey the notes you play.

Finally, I'm pleased to report that the controls offer a gradual increase and decrease through the whole of each turn, so you will hear gradual changes in volume and tone – as opposed to the annoying on/off operation that some Fender pots seem to deliver!

Conclusion

This bass is a great tribute to the master, solid and versatile – and although the fretless tone may not suit every musical style or your particular taste, it can't be denied that it offers an alternative colour to your bass playing. Fender have obviously gone to town: the quality is tangible and every aspect of the performance is of a very high standard. Needless to say, you won't replicate all of Jaco's tones in an instant, because his bass was unique through modification, his amplification was another individual aspect, and then there was the tone in his head, conveyed by his fingers – but you can pay tribute to his legacy with this great-sounding and great-playing bass.

It's amazing that you can get such a powerful, warm, clear and defined sound, with full-range frequency response, out of a very lightweight amp and speaker cabinet.
And the most important thing is:
I hear the real sound of my bass.
It seems that Markbass has not only listened carefully to their amps, but they have also listened to bass players!
Alain Caron
MARK PROPRIETARY TECHNOLOGY
MPT
Powered by
markworld.it
CMD SUPER COMBO K1
The new ALAIN CARON signature CMD SUPER COMBO K1 has been developed respecting Alain's high standards. This 3-ways combo is amplified by a powerful 1000W MPT (Mark Proprietary Technology) power amp to offer the best fidelity, dynamic and a very serious headroom! Top-quality sound, incredible power, simple and effective controls... all in a highly-portable unit!
14.76"/37,5cm
17.32"/44cm
27.17"/69cm
59.75lbs/27,1kg
MARK WORLD
Mark bass ®

DI CARLO
Fiorenza Blonde

If you have the need for speed, Miguel Di Carlo will happily oblige. Hywel Davies takes a ride into the danger zone

Di Carlo
www.migueldicarlo.com

£2310

When the inhuman playing of bassist Dino Fiorenza gets translated into signature bass form, you know you've got something exciting on your hands. Teaming up with fellow Italian luthiers and founders of Miguel Di Carlo Basses, Michele Di Carlantonio and Salvo Lupo, Fiorenza presented his signature model, the Blonde, to us at this year's London Bass Guitar Show. This hot rod was built for speed and precision, so does it handle well on those tight corners – or will it drift off the tracks?

> **"THIS ITALIAN STALLION IS RARING TO GO AND WILL TAKE SOME TAMING, BUT THE REWARDS ARE PLENTIFUL"**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £2310 [approximate value of €2500]
Made in | Italy
Body | Lime
Neck | Maple, 34" scale
Neck joint | Bolt-on, five-bolt attachment.
Nut Width | 40mm
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 21
Pickups | 2 x Di Marzio Ultra Jazz
Electronics | Coolsound 2-way custom circuit
Controls | Volume, balance, bass, treble and active/passive switch
Hardware | Hipshot gold bridge, Hipshot gold machines and Hipshot detuner
Weight | 4kg
Case/gig bag included | Yes
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A bass that will push your playing to the limits
Minus | Three-band EQ lacks big mids
Overall | Fast, fun and considerably cheaper than a sports car!

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

Build Quality

With a five-bolt neck joint, C-shaped maple neck and rosewood fretboard, the Blonde offers a classic visual combination. As you would expect from a bass that is designed for swift, responsive playing, the Blonde is very light on its feet. Weighing in at around four kilos, the light limewood body allows enough stability and balance to pull off daring feats without impeding on your style.

Wearing its influences on its sleeve, the red and faded black matte finish of the body, with matching headstock, could almost be a touching nod to the shred movement of the 80s. When old meets new like this, it perfectly sums up the Blonde's character. Keeping things simple, the controls include bass, treble, balance and volume pots, which aren't rocket surgery to figure out, allowing you to crack on with the important stuff. As electronics go, you're in great hands, with two-single coil Ultra Jazz DiMarzio pickups.

Sound And Playability

Plugged in, it's obvious that the Blonde sure likes its treble. This bass has punch, and lots of it. Finger, pick, slap, tap, it makes no difference, every note is brought to life with vivid conviction. Metal players in

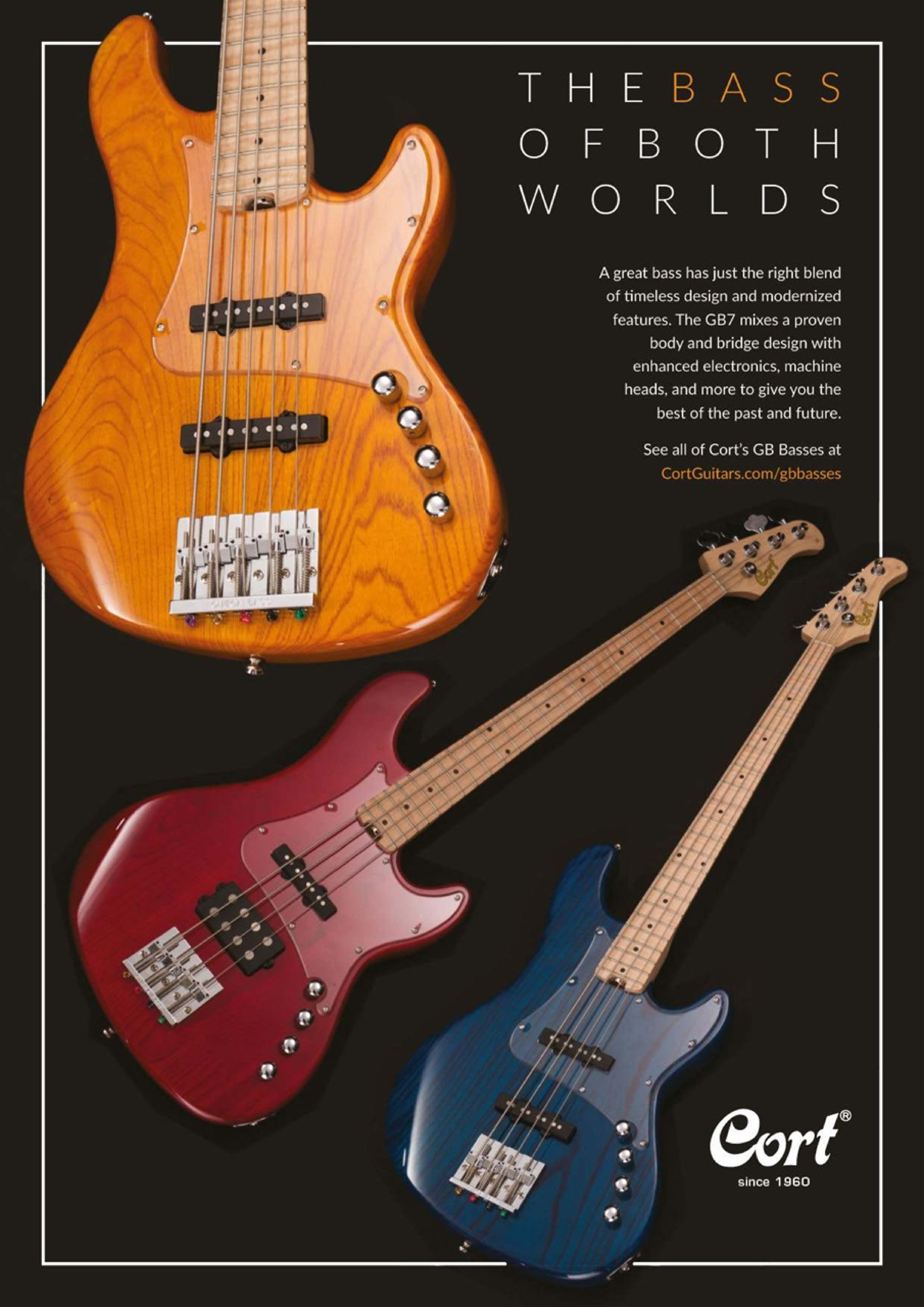
particular will get a kick out of this bass. Set to active, the top end will especially help those of the headbanging persuasion to cut through dense walls of riffs.

One slight downside: hunting down mids may prove to be a bit of a challenge when you look at the control options. Achieving this with the instrument alone is tricky, but not impossible; just a bit of a faff. This is where the Blonde does show its limitations, but with the right rig or a decent EQ pedal, this can be addressed. The odds are, however, that if you've gone out of your way to fork over your hard-earned cash for this bass, taking a warm and woolly approach isn't really what you had in mind.

As for playability, the Blonde's accessibility really helps to define this instrument. Your hands can roam freely with ease, as the upper register is open for business. As maple necks go, this is an excellent one: without a single dead spot on the instrument, the consistency is uncanny. Giving the player full access to the higher register, the bottom side of the neck closest to the body is deliberately chamfered, utilising a carefully shaped cutaway which encourages you to reach the dusty end of the fretboard. The action is reasonably low, set up for a comfortable play, with the strings spaced in the Goldilocks zone that is not too close, and not too far – but just right for finger accuracy.

Conclusion

This bass knows its audience and is a genuine contender in its field: Di Carlo have done an outstanding job – as long as you're prepared to go large with the tone options. Much like a sports car, you need to plan on gunning it everywhere you go. This Italian stallion is raring to go and will take some taming, but the rewards are plentiful.


THE BASS
OF BOTH
WORLDS
A great bass has just the right blend of timeless design and modernized features. The GB7 mixes a proven body and bridge design with enhanced electronics, machine heads, and more to give you the best of the past and future.
See all of Cort's GB Basses at
CortGuitars.com/gbbasses
Cort®
since 1960

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £1930
Made In | Holland
Colour | Natural
Body | Tulipwood core, flame alder top
Neck | Maple and purpleheart, 5-piece laminate, 34" scale
Neck Joint | Bolt on, four-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 41mm
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 21
Pickups | 2 x Custom EM J4 single-coil pickups with standard windings
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, pickup pan, tone, boost switch
Hardware | Black, lightweight Schaller machine heads, ABM bridge
Weight | 4 kg
Case/gig bag included | No
Left-hand option available | Yes (custom order)

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A fine instrument that does everything well
Minus | A little pricey – but you're paying for a handmade instrument
Overall | A surprisingly impressive bass that surprised us immediately – highly recommended

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

ELLIO
Martina BS4

Always be wary of a bass with understated looks, it might just grab your heart! Mike Brooks goes Double Dutch with this cultured offering

Ellio Martina Guitars
www.elliomartina.com

£1930

Ellio Martina's instruments have a cult following across Europe, so we were interested to see what all the fuss was about. Luckily for us, Ellio himself had a number of fine offerings on display at the LBGS 2017 – so we headed to his stand and were presented with this fine, if understated, instrument for review. First impressions last: we bore it to our secret review bunker at the show, and gave it a thorough going-over...

Build Quality

To the casual onlooker, this bass is the equivalent of a grey suit. We were almost tempted to pre-judge, saying 'We've seen it all before, there's nothing special here'... but then we sat down with the bass and played it. The 'Never judge a book by its cover' maxim has never been so well applied! Traditional visuals and fine craftsmanship go hand in hand, and while this bass will hardly rock the boat in the looks

department, it's very impressive when picked up and played. Smooth, rounded body curves are backed up with front and rear contouring, while the tulipwood and flame alder body timbers benefit from a smooth satin finish – as does the five-piece maple and purpleheart neck.

This bass can hardly be described as 'in your face', but it doesn't need to be. It is all about the sum of its parts, so the flame figuring offsets the horizontal figuring of the alder top, while the dark wooden pickup covers give the bass an organic slant. There is some headstock bias, but this is rectified once placed on a strap – and once wearing the instrument, you begin to feel what this bass is all about. A smooth playing experience in physical terms seems to be guaranteed.

With 19mm string spacing, a shallow D-shaped neck profile and a 41mm nut width, the strings are easily navigated, while the level of finishing and attention to detail is very high indeed. Everything about this bass feels right, and though the visuals may not be blowing your

socks off, the overall feel is fantastic. Pearl dots have been used on the front and side of the neck, while an abalone inlay with Ellio's initials has been inlaid into the headstock. All of the black hardware works as it should; the lightweight Schaller tuners operate smoothly and sturdily, while the controls for volume, balance and tone are effectively laid out and also operate smoothly. A three-way switch offers normal operation and a 30 per cent boost to each pickup, depending on its position.

Sounds And Playability

So the BS4 feels great – but how does it sound? Well, I'm happy to report that this bass has a naturally warm character, and being passive, we're spared the tonal extremes that active circuitry can provide. However, be under no illusion that this instrument might be a drab affair – it isn't. String volume across the neck is consistent, and whether you play lightly or like to dig in, this bass responds very well to changes in playing style and string attack. Panning between both pickups illustrates plenty of tonal light and shade, with each pickup doing what it should; the neck unit provides a solid, ballsy tone, while the bridge pickup adds a degree of bite and articulation.

The tone control offers a pleasantly usable tonal palette. Rock playing sounds just as convincing as the tighter funk tones and honky bounce delivered from the soloed bridge pickup. The bolt-on construction and the multi-laminate neck contribute a sturdiness and clear-sounding tone, reinforced by the tight neck-to-body connection. The boost switch provides additional tonal options should you find you need them, and helps to define certain aspects of your tone, depending on your playing style.

After some time with the bass, we had to give it back, much to our disappointment – as it truly is a highly playable and comfortable bass. The standard of finishing across the instrument is such that it already

feels played in, almost like putting on your favourite slippers. This is a welcoming and enjoyable bass, if ever there was one.

Conclusion

Ellio should be congratulated for producing such a great all-round bass with very thorough tones, suitable for all styles. Although it doesn't scream 'bling' at you, what it does offer is a refined playing experience, and it does this very well. For almost two grand, you may want a little more sparkle for your money but for many players, this bass may well hit the nail firmly on the head. If you're looking for a high-quality passive bass which calls you back time and again, look no further.

Aria Pro II
PROFESSIONAL BASSES
Made in Japan
日本製
Basses shown: SB1000B/2, IGB Lux, SB Black & Gold, IGB RC
Aria UK Ltd, Unit 1, Craufurd Business Park, Silverdale Road, Hayes, Middlesex, UB3 3BN
www.ariauk.com 01483 238720 sales@ariauk.com

NS DESIGN
NXT4a Upright

Being a bass player doesn't mean you're tied to electric bass. The upright, in its different forms, can take your playing to another dimension. Mike Brooks checks out the NS Design Upright

Bass Direct
www.bassdirect.co.uk

£1499

Although NS Design Upright models have been around for a long time, we thought it was about time we took a look at one to see what they had to offer – especially for the electric bassist keen to explore the world of upright basses (without selling a kidney for the privilege). Although the NS might not supply the full upright feel, the general consensus among the bass community is that it provides a convenient upright experience without the full-sized instrument's transportation issues. If you've thought of these instruments as a bit of a gimmick in the past, consider the number of working pros who have taken the NS Design Upright under their wing because it offers a close

approximation of an upright tone. Let's get our hands dirty and check one out.

Build Quality

Bearing in mind that these NXT models are almost £2500 cheaper than NS Design's top-flight EU models, which are constructed from maple, finished in satin black and fitted with an ebony fingerboard, the NXT4a has the feel of a solid piece of kit. The through-neck construction offers a rigid and sturdy build quality, and from the outset, this comes across as a professional instrument. The machine heads operate exceptionally smoothly before passing over a well-cut ebony nut. The dark, richly coloured ebony fingerboard features small white position markers up

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £1499
Made In | Czech Republic
Colour | Black
Body | Maple
Neck | Maple, 41.73" scale
Neck Joint | Through-neck
Nut Width | 45mm
Fingerboard | Ebony
Frets | 24+
Pickups | NS Polar directional piezo pickup system
Electronics | Active
Controls | Toggle switch for Polar Pickup Balance (between pizzicato/arco modes), volume (push/pull for active/self-powered output), tone (treble roll off)
Hardware | Rock maple bridge (optional end pin, boomerang strap system, frame strap system)
Weight | 4.8 kg
Case/gig bag included | Gig bag
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | An interesting instrument that accomplishes its mission
Minus | Takes some experimentation to get the most from it
Overall | A favourable option for any player looking to try an upright-styled instrument

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□

to the 24th fretting position, after which they are graduated along the fingerboard on the upper side from the nut upwards, across the middle of the fingerboard from about halfway, and then along the lower side as the neck reaches the body.

Control wise, there is a volume pot, push/pull in nature for battery-free active operation, and tone controls. Then there is a pickup balance selector switch, which doubles as a playing mode selector depending on your choice of fingerstyle or bowed operation. These are located on the player's side of the body. To achieve Active mode, the supplied charger needs to be connected for 60 seconds in order to achieve 16 hours of playing time – not bad! The jack socket and string ferrules for through-body stringing are located on the reverse of the body, and the dyed black, adjustable rock maple bridge seems functional. The piezo-design NS Polar Pickup System is designed to distinguish lateral from vertical string movement for a consistent signal.

Sounds And Playability

Although it took some time to get familiar with the fingerboard and general dimensions, I took to this bass immediately, enjoying the rich warm tones on offer. I fully accept that it isn't a ready-made replacement for an authentic upright bass, but then it doesn't incur the physical demands on the player that a regular upright requires in order to be played properly. I have heard these instruments described simply as large electric fretless bass guitars – and to a degree that is accurate – but after some time of playing the NXT4a, what comes across is that this is an instrument in its own right.

Sustain, 'mwah' and tonal depth are all available for the player to utilise, and while the considerable neck depth requires some familiarity, it didn't feel like hard work. Obviously, practice is required to get the most of it, but running through the controls and applying some simple tone-shaping principles showed a surprisingly varied tonal palette. The tone control works very well in adding some light and shade, while the push/pull operation of the volume control, bringing the active operation into play, brought the upright to life with a stronger, more present midrange response. The bottom end always feels powerful and authoritative, while the top end remains smooth and articulate. Bringing the pickup balance switch into operation supplies further tonal variation.

Overall, I think the NXT4a sits somewhere between an electric fretless bass guitar and a vintage upright bass, and although its physical constraints can't replicate the tonal characteristics of the seasoned timber used in quality upright instruments, it does offer a fair compromise.

Conclusion

I'm suitably impressed – and I understand why these instruments have been so popular for so long. At £1500, they aren't cheap, especially if upright is not your main bass requirement – but then an authentic upright isn't going to be cheap either, with storage and transport costs on top. This instrument is certainly worthy of further investigation if the idea of entering the world of upright bass tickles your fancy.

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MARKBASS
CMD Super Combo K1

Long-time Markbass enthusiast and frighteningly good French Canadian bassist Alain Caron has an update for his signature bass combo. Kev Sanders plugs in

MSL Pro
www.mslpro.co.uk

£1299

How do you define the ultimate bass combo? Sound quality? Power? Size to weight ratio? Of course, you'd take all of these things into account – and that being the case, a strong contender would have to be this new Markbass K1 Alain Caron signature combo.

Visually, the K1 is clearly a Markbass product, but it differs when compared to the previous version in several important ways. Perhaps most obvious is that it's a good deal heavier. That's partly due to the more powerful amp and extra 5" speaker, but it's mostly because of the new three-way cab and redesigned long-throw 12" driver. It's built to handle and reproduce a huge amount of low frequency bass – so it needs to be robust.

I used the K1 solidly for a couple of weeks in a wide range of settings from concert halls to intimate clubs – and boy, did it deliver in every situation. However, using it every day like this did throw up a little niggle, so let's deal with that first. Unless you have tiny hands or you've trained as a bovine vet *[Nice – Ed]*, the amp's back panel is virtually inaccessible in the normal way, due to it being such a long way into the depth of the cabinet. To solve this problem, there's a small removable 'trapdoor' section on top of the amp which allows access to the power in, DI input and so on from above. There's no handle or tab to grip from the outside, so you still need to pop it out via the back of the amp.

This solution works well enough, and when in place keeps the external profile of the amp uncluttered, but I have to say it does feel like a bit of an afterthought – and plugging in the DI or using the effects loop is a bit of a faff. That aside, everything else is very straightforward. By the way, a useful feature which I haven't seen on the back panel of a Markbass combo before is the Speakon connection for the speaker cab, meaning you can use the amp head with a different speaker, or add another 8 Ohm cab if you wish.

If you're familiar with the standard Markbass front panel layout, you'll see a lot that's familiar here. Noticeable by its absence is the usual VLE (vintage loudspeaker emulator) filter, leaving just the VPF (variable pitch filter). On most Markbass amps and combos you can leave the EQ pretty much flat and use the two filters to get your perfect bass sound.

Here, the VPF still gives you a wide range of sounds, increasing the low end and high frequencies while scooping the mids at just below 400hz as you turn it up, but for fine tuning some input from the EQ is also needed. This is no bad thing, of course – that's what it's there for, it's just a slightly different way of working if, like me, you've always left the EQ flat when working with the standard Markbass preamp layout.

With the EQ flat and the VPF off, the sound from the amp is remarkably uncoloured. This means that whatever bass you're using, you get the absolutely true sound of that instrument. My old passive Precision sounds distinctively 'Fendery', while a modern active five-string with its own powerful EQ sounds bright and punchy, just as its maker intended.

So far so good, then. We have a compact – if slightly heavy – combo with a billiard-table flat response and plenty of oomph. And I mean *plenty*. Although it's rated at 1000 watts, the 8 Ohm cab means you're drawing about 600 watts from the combo on its own. With such an efficient cabinet design, the K1 was always going to be loud enough – and make no mistake, this amp is capable of some massive sound levels.

What's really impressive is not just the volume this amp can reproduce, but the quality of the sound at such high levels. There's virtually no clipping at all: the sound is super-clean even when ear-splittingly loud. I've played through decent 4x10 rigs that sound less impressive than this. You might imagine that a single 12" speaker would perhaps lack a little of the very lowest frequencies when pushed, but that redesigned driver and the rear ported cab deliver a flat response right down to 40hz – and on several occasions I actually found myself backing off the bass. Amazing.

The new Alain Caron K1 combo is a big step up from the previous model, which itself was a great amp, so if you're after the ultimate bass combo and you have the funds, you really should give the K1 a test drive. You may not play like Alain Caron, but I promise you'll be heard – loud and clear...

WHAT WE THINK

Price | £1299
Made in | Assembled in Indonesia
Power | 600W RMS @ 8 Ohm / 1000W RMS @ 4 Ohm
Speakers | 1x12", 1x5", 1x1"compression driver
Features | 1000w @ 4 Ohm Class D power amp, input gain, master; 4-band EQ, VPF filter; FX loop, tuner output, balanced DI output with pre/post and ground lift switches, Speakon speaker connector
Weight | 27.1 kg

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | One of the best pro combos available today
Minus | Accessing the back panel is awkward
Overall | We expect Markbass combos to be good. This one's exceptional, and ticks every conceivable box for sound and quality

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

ZOOM FX
Roundup

Three rocking chunks of metal for the arena performer in you, stamped on by Joel McIver

Zoom Corporation
www.zoom-uk.com

The nice folks at Zoom Corporation, a company which sounds like it's on the planet Alderaan but which is actually in Hertfordshire, have sent us some tasty gear for review, so let's give their stuff a whirl. First up is the frankly amazing **Valeton Dapper Bass Effects Strip** (£160), a multi-effects module which is small, solid, easy to use and stacked with loads of functionality. You could comfortably smack a stage invader around the head with it if necessary (legal disclaimer: we don't recommend that you actually do smack a stage invader etc etc) without it breaking, unlike the hideous black plastic multi-effects units that I grew up with in the 80s.

Plug into this friendly green chunk of metal, taking note of the effects loop, thru function and XLR out as desired, and enjoy the fact that the control pots light up in each section when you activate it, rendering an LED unnecessary and also making the little knobs easy to find when (not if) you're frantically trying to adjust them on a pitch-black stage. From left, you've got a chorus, octaver, EQ, envelope filter with fuzz on/off, tuner, boost and compressor, all of which function exactly as you need them to. Sure, the chorus only has a single depth control, so you don't have advanced shaping of the effect, and the envelope filter isn't quite as powerful as the dedicated filters we've seen – but the octaver is ace for a synth tone, the EQ is far more meaty than it has any right to be and the boost has tons of power. All for £160? You're laughing.

The **KDHK Abyss Bass Overdrive** (£178), with its massive, distorted noise, is quite capable of disturbing cows at 100 paces, as indeed it should because it's got the initials of Kirk Hammett of up-and-coming 'thrash metal' hopefuls Metallica on it. Relatively simple to operate and built like a bomb shelter, the Abyss (note: geographical features are always good for a heavy metal name) works by tweaking Gain, Dirty, Clean and Treble controls plus a Hi-Lo selector. The reason why you're paying £178 for the Abyss, instead of £35 for a day-glo plastic distortion from Overdrives 'R' Us, is because it contains two circuits and bi-amping tech which means that your clean and dirty (aka dry and wet) sounds have their own paths. This, it says here, makes them sound bigger when they reconnect at the other

"THE OVERDRIVEN TONE IS A GENUINE THING OF BEAUTY..."

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Valeton Dapper Bass Effects Strip, £160
Features | Chorus, Octave, EQ, envelope filter, tuner, booster, compressor, effects loop, XLR out
Dimensions | 320mm(D) x 65mm(W) x 42mm(H)
Weight | 690g
Power | 9V DC

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

KHDK Bass Overdrive, £178
Features | Gain, Dirty, Clean, Treble, Hi/Lo option
Dimensions | 120mm(D) x 63mm(W) x 38mm(H)
Weight | 276g
Power | 9V DC or battery

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

Zvex Basstortion, £209
Features | Volume, Tone, Drive, Bright/Dark selector
Dimensions | 119mm(D) x 60mm(W) x 46mm(H)
Weight | 249g
Power | 9V DC or battery

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

end. We certainly enjoyed the pedal's ability to balance or unbalance the two signals as per your personal taste, and the overdriven tone itself is a genuine thing of beauty – smooth, jagged and subtle as you prefer, and with almost no loss of bottom end. That's why you're paying the big bucks.

On which note, the **Zvex Basstortion**, which comes in at £209, is a sweet little pedal designed to replicate the sound of an overdriven Ampeg SVT, according to its makers. There's certainly something to this claim, and there's no doubt that it gives you a great range of tones, from slightly clanky to 'the full Lemmy'. The Bright/Dark tone-shaping switch is especially satisfying for quick use on the fly. However, the Abyss does a similar job at 30 quid less and has a wider range of options, so unless you're a Zvex freak, look elsewhere before investing.

BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our redesigned tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...
Joel McIver, editor

Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here!
Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across 17 years of touring, and 42 solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for over two decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists – but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue?
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners | 74

Now you're rolling with theory and techniques, it's time to hit the next level
Stuart Clayton has been a professional musician, writer and transcriber since 2002 and has worked in almost every conceivable musical situation – function bands, cruise ship gigs, theatre shows and more. He spent four years recording and touring the world with legendary Emerson, Lake & Palmer drummer Carl Palmer and has worked for BGM since its first issue. Since 2007 Stuart has worked as the Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Bristol, where he continues to teach all levels of the degree course. In addition, he has also worked as the Bass Guitar Technical Specialist for the Rockschool exam board. Stuart now runs Bassline Publishing, which publishes transcription books for legendary bassists such as Mark King, Marcus Miller, Stuart Hamm, Bernard Edwards, Stuart Zender and John Entwistle, as well as an acclaimed range of tuition books.

STUART CLAYTON

Intermediate | 78

Take the bass world by storm with the ultimate tuition section
Philip Mann studied at Basstech, completing the London College of Music's bachelor's degree programme, secured a master's degree in performance and receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. He then established himself as a busy electric and double bassist. Endorsed by Overwater and Vanderkley, he has appeared in London's West End and across Europe on many productions. His performance and session credits include recording at the legendary Sun Studios in Memphis, and working with Greek fusion guitarist Tolis Zavaliaris and the Big Band Metheny ensemble. He has featured as a solo demonstration artist at the London Bass Guitar Show every year from 2012. Currently, he is a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School of Music and lectures for Scott's Bass Lessons.

PHIL MANN

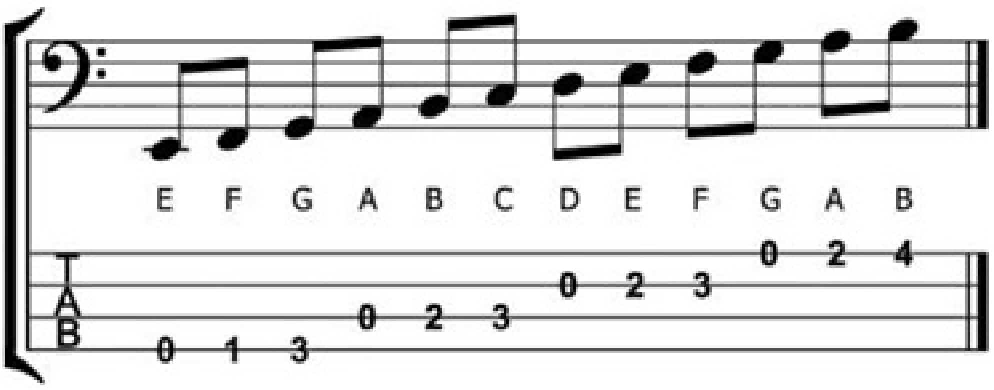
Advanced | 84

BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

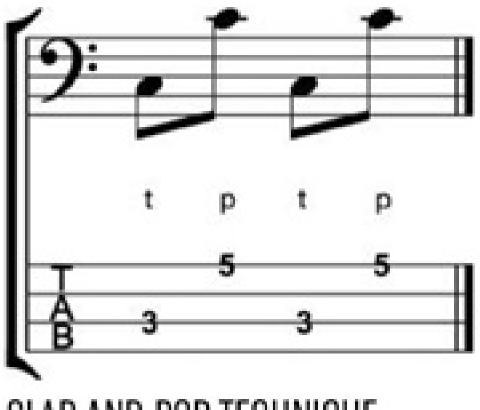
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.



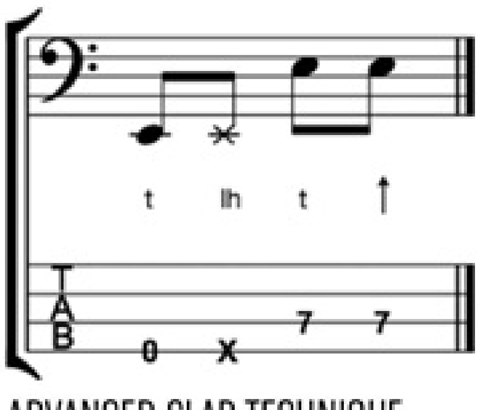
Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

PLAYING TECHNIQUES



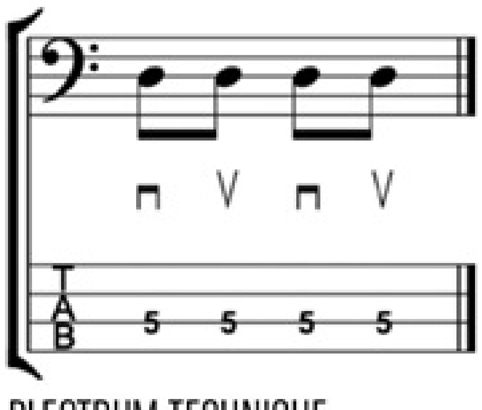
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



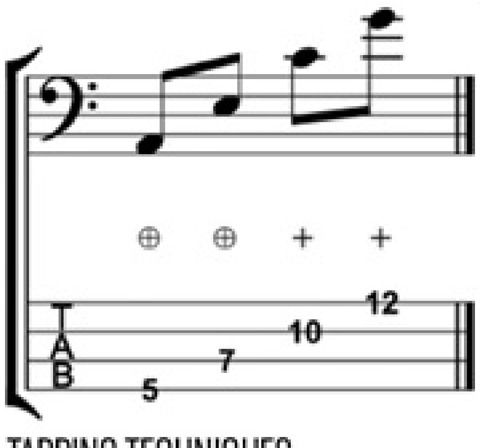
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

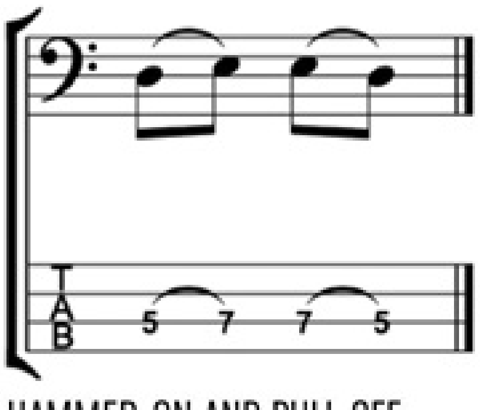
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

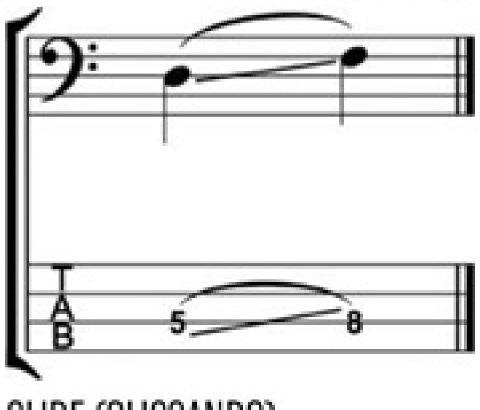
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are shown with '+'. Specific fingers will be shown with numbers if necessary

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



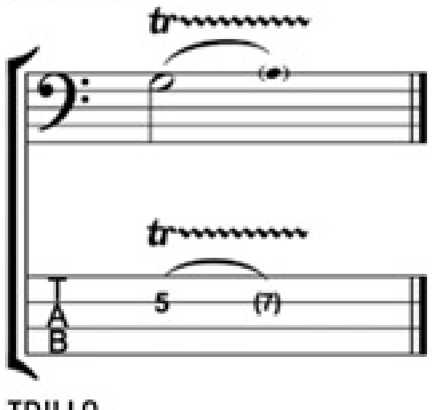
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



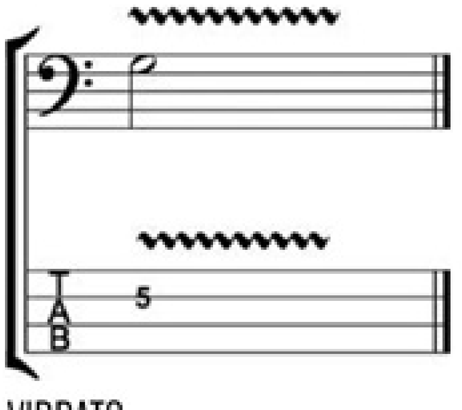
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note



TRILLS

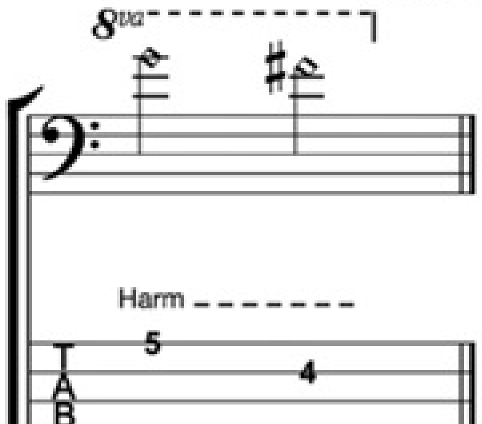
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs



VIBRATO

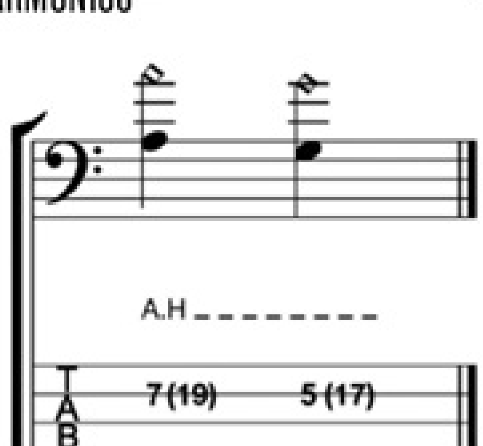
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

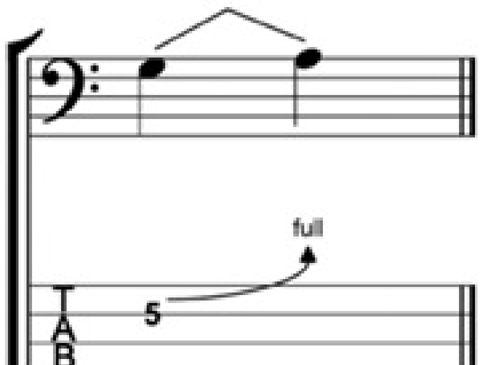
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

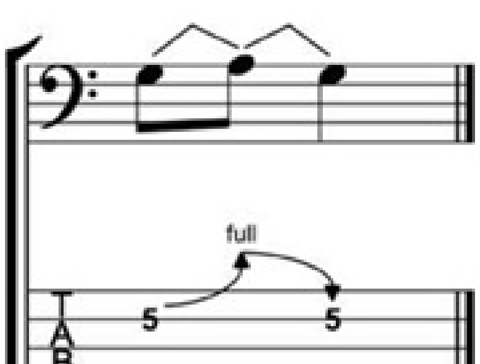
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and placing the edge of the picking hand thumb an octave higher (the note shown in brackets)

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

THE FRONT LINE

Want to make it as a professional bassist? Listen up as BGM's world-class bass team reports back from the tourbus

THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Enter the landscape of the mind with jazz maestro Ruth

I always find doing rhythmic exercises quite meditative, and enjoy doing them on the train with a metronome app on my phone, which allows me to put in hours of practice without my instrument. I can't stress enough how important it is for any bass player to have a good, solid sense of pulse, as well as understanding more complex rhythmic patterns. If you play improvised music of any sort, it's a great skill to have, because you never know what a drummer or a soloist might throw at you – and without this understanding, it's very easy to get lost within a tune or a form. This has happened to me quite a lot, so rhythmic exercises are very high on my practice routine. A drummer friend of mine recently introduced me to a great exercise which is definitely worth sharing if you want to practise more complex rhythms over a long form. Take a jazz standard of your choice and learn the melody really well. Learn how to play it if possible, but being able to sing it will do. Make sure that you know it so well that you know exactly on which beat of the bar every phrase starts and ends. Jazz standards often have a 32-bar form, which is a good length for this exercise. Start by tapping every beat and singing the melody, then only tap on beats two and four of every bar. After that, start tapping quavers in phrases of three, which means dotted crotchets. You're now only tapping beat one of every third bar, so the cycle feels a lot longer – and it will feel difficult at the beginning to sing the melody phrases in the right place. You can do the same exercise while singing the root notes, thirds, fifths or sevenths of each chord instead of the main melody. Once you have mastered phrasing it in groups of three, do the same with groups of fives, sevens and so on. It feels great and will help you to be a lot more free within your improvisation.

www.ruthgoller.com

THE METALHEAD

MIKE POGGIONE

Monstrosity bassist Mike goes back... way, way back

Over the past few months I've had a lot of people asking me what got me into metal bass. I believe I was around eight years old when some of my family members introduced me to hard rock and hair metal. I remember seeing posters of Poison, Helloween, Cinderella and Ratt in my cousin's bedroom. Each summer I would visit my cousins in Michigan with my family, and I started to listen to their music in the mid and late 1980s. I didn't know much about music at that time, but I did know I enjoyed the sound of it, and the imagery! I became completely obsessed with Guns N'Roses and Mötley Crüe in fifth grade, and I knew that I wanted to play guitar, so for Christmas my parents bought me a very inexpensive Fender Stratocaster knock-off. I started playing it a lot and then found out about speed and thrash metal. I then became obsessed with Megadeth, Metallica, Testament and Slayer, and one day, at a high school rally, the band's bass player was absent – so I put down the guitar and picked up the bass to fill in. I instantly realised how much I enjoyed playing the bass and absolutely fell in love with the low end and vibration of the instrument and the amp. The bass-lines from 'Wake Up Dead', 'Five Magics' and 'Peace Sells' by Megadeth were so inspiring to me, as was Metallica's 'My Friend Of Misery'. I decided to stop playing guitar and focus on playing bass: there are too many amazing guitar players in comparison to great bass players! I started to focus my interest on heavier groups such as Morbid Angel, Deicide and Cannibal Corpse. These bands collectively shaped my life towards finding musical outlets which focused on extreme, technical metal... more of which next month!

www.monstrosity.us

THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Making it work on stage with Therapy? bassist Mike

© www.ashleybird.com

We've been doing a lot of touring recently and, between some great support slots and a summer of festivals, it's been a real eye-opener to check out other musicians' gear and the ways in which they run their shows. It's always a privilege to get a peek behind the curtain, and I tried to use it as another learning experience. This year, the bands that I enjoyed most fell into two very distinct camps. Two of these – with very different approaches – were the highlights for me. One of them had a massive multimedia show, with pretty much every aspect of the gig running from one main software brain. Everything from monitor mixes, guitar effects changes and the front-of-house mix was running from it. Everything arrived flightcased and ready to go, so the local crew basically opened the truck, rolled the cases out to where they needed to be and hey presto, out popped a ready-to-slay rock show. There was a huge crew to run it all, each member had an individual tech and they had two additional musicians providing backing vocals, electronics, DJ-ing and yet more guitar work. Months had been spent in planning and weeks in rehearsal, by the looks and sounds of it. Sometimes, though, the simpler methods worked just as well. I also saw an inspiring show done by a very simply set-up band playing in daylight with a rock'n'roll plug-and-play approach. This band took great delight in extending intros, focusing on sections where the crowd participation became integrated, and even slipping in a couple of cheeky segues. These folks looked like they were having a great time, and their approach endeared them to both audience and local crew. Talking of crew, this band used a single onstage tech between all five musicians. The balance between getting the show slick and keeping it spontaneous is always a tricky one to gauge, especially when you've gone all-in for either approach. Having said that, I have no doubt that both bands could still put across their music with a couple of acoustic guitars and a simple vocal PA. Both showed me that there's always a different way to win over a crowd at a live event: one might involve more shock and awe, while the other provokes a more low key, organic connection with the crowd.

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE EXTENDED-RANGE SPECIALIST

STEWART MCKINSEY

Ten-string-playing warlock McKinsey pushes you out of your comfort zone

Now that we've taken time away from the amp and focused on what we normally do, it's time to get back to the gig. Sort of. If you aren't normally a solo performer, I want you to put in some time in an ensemble. If you're normally part of a band, it's time to do something alone. If you do both, you need to find another context – for example, working in a genre you don't like. For a long time, even though I listened to some country music, I never played it. It just wasn't my thing, because the bass never jumped out of the music and spoke to me. One day I realised that this simply meant that I needed to get deeper into it. As soon as I started paying attention to what the bass was actually doing in a variety of country music, it opened up all the elements of the music to me. The power of hitting the one hard every measure was incredibly illuminating to someone whose career had been spent on two and four of the bar. Those powerfully human melodies speak to an instrumentalist, and starting to truly exploit the major scale was something I'd actually avoided. I've addressed again and again the need to challenge ourselves if we're to be artists, to stretch at every possible occasion. Just as the benefits of playing with musicians on a higher level are obvious, taking yourself out of your comfort zone should be a regular part of what you do. If you've never tried to engage an audience without a band, do it. You will find out quickly how different this is from playing in a band. If you're comfortable in a solo environment, put yourself into a situation where you need to interact with others to make the music and where you aren't in control of every element. If you're a live musician, get into the studio and get under some headphones, preferably with an engineer and a producer telling you what they want. Each time you shake up what you do, you're adapting and developing. Development is growth, which in turn is positive change. We'll finish out the year getting back to technique and exercises, but I hope these last few months outside the comfort zone have made you look and listen to yourself differently. A static environment is an artist's enemy; be as dynamic as you can, no matter what you do.

www.facebook.com + search 'Stewart McKinsey'

FIRST OUR WORLD
WAS A DISC.
THEN, A SPHERE.
TURNS OUT,
IT'S TWO
DISCS!
THE POWER
OF MUSIC!

thomann
MUSIC IS OUR PASSION

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners' Tutorial

Limber up those digits: the great Steve Lawson presents a novice's guide to playing bass

This month we're going to be looking at one of the great paradoxes of bass playing. It's universally true that the things we spend the most time on are the ones that people are least aware of when we play, but which have the biggest impact on the music. The finer details of two major aspects of our playing can totally change how a song sounds, even though few people will know that it's us that's making it sound awesome. Those two things are tone and feel.

A huge amount of the stuff that we learn from teachers and books is about the notes we play, and about easily digestible concepts like dexterity and the broad application of specific techniques. But when we drill down into those, we get to the more zen-like space where the music feels different to us depending how how we approach those broader concepts. Big statements like 'I can play slap bass' or 'I can play fast' impart little information that's of consequence to how we'll actually function in a band setting, and whether those skills will actually fit in situ. It's quite possible, as Chuck Rainey showed with his sneaky slap line on 'Peg' by Steely Dan, to use a technique that the producer actually hates and still make it work, just as it's possible to choose the right technique and still get the feel completely wrong.

So, how do you, at this nascent stage of your journey with the bass, start to think about these things? Well, here's another universal truth – you know way more about music than your fledgling journey with the bass guitar shows at this stage. Just by growing up in the world as it is, you are surrounded by music, and we all

Aim to get a consistent sound with the pick by anchoring your hand to make accurate repetition easier

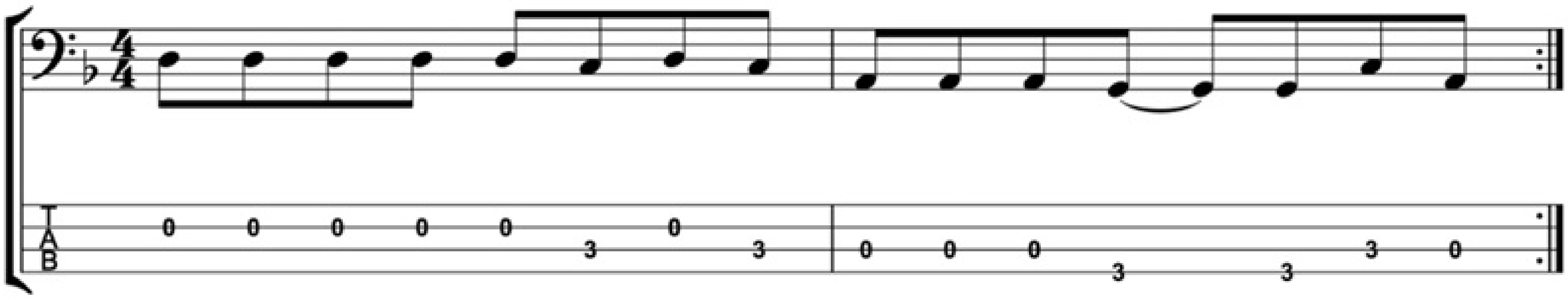
make value judgements about very specific details in music every day. We hear a track on the radio, and within a couple of bars the production tells us which decade it's from, what kind of music it is, and we make a judgement about whether we're likely to be into it or not. Walking round a DIY store, we suddenly realise that the Beatles song we're listening to isn't the original but a soundalike cover. Something about the backing vocals and the drum sound just isn't right... How do we know? We just do. We've learned loads about music without giving it a name or doing an exam on it.

So this journey into understanding the Zen Of Bass is about putting all of that learning to good use. The question we're asking isn't whether the line we're playing is 'right' – we know that already, by whether we've got the notes in the right order and the rhythm matches the song. What we're concerned with is whether or not what we're playing is 'good'. Good is a value judgement, not the result of ticking some boxes. There's no quiz that will show you what is 'good'. No easy list of bullet points.

Instead, we get to build a set of skills that allow us to play lines in a number of different ways and then make a choice based on how the music makes us feel. Does the line sit better with fingers or a pick? Well, to find out, you need to develop some facility with both, but you also need to try and get the urgency of a pick with the tone of your fingers... From this process we come up with hybrid techniques and blended ideas. This is the path to developing your own sound. The thing that makes you you. And it starts now. This isn't some precious domain of pros and experts. You're already an expert, even if your fingers won't yet do what they're told all the time. You just need to learn to tap into how the music is making you feel, and get used to experimenting with a number of ways of playing.

Let's look in more detail at that example we gave above. Let's take a seemingly simple, punky rock line...

EXAMPLE 1



"WE'VE LEARNED LOADS ABOUT MUSIC WITHOUT GIVING IT A NAME OR DOING AN EXAM ON IT"

Getting the upstroke to match the downstroke takes time. Compare the sound to all downstrokes and match it

Pick near the bridge for brighter, thinner sounds. Try using your nails if you have any!

Picking with your thumb near the neck gives a softer, almost upright tone

Getting those notes in the right order is not that hard. Depending how fast we play it, there might be some work needed to keep up with the tempo, but it's not a particularly tricky line at first look. But, as the great Lee Sklar says, when the notes are fairly simple, that's just means you've got all that extra attention to apply to *how* you're going to play it, rather than *what* you're going to play. So here we can start by comparing what happens when we pick the line with two fingers, versus picking it with one finger. Alternating the first two fingers on our picking hand is, for the most part, our default technique. But that doesn't mean we have to use it every time, and the choice to do something else is always there for us, governed by the feel we're going for.

Try the line alternating your first and second finger, then try it again with just your first finger. It'll take you a while to get the hang of playing a line with this many notes in it with one finger, but it should quickly become apparent that there's an increased urgency and drive to playing with one finger. When we pick with two fingers there's a natural 'on-off' motion, a swagger, a sway. One of the fingers is usually slightly dominant, and that's the root of a lot of more laidback rock feels. With one finger, there's no gentler foil to the dominant finger's insistence. It's all drive all the time. In terms of technical 'orthodoxy', picking with one finger is often frowned upon, but seriously, who really gives a stuff about orthodoxy? We're just trying to sound good...

So now we have two approaches to playing this line – but we've got other variables we can consider. Move your picking hand along the length of the string, from the bridge to the end of the neck. The tone will change as you shift. If your thumb is permanently anchored to the pickup, you'll struggle to move, so we're going to have to look at other ways of anchoring

"ALL MUSICAL SOUNDS HAVE FOUR FACTORS, KNOWN AS ADSR — ATTACK, DECAY, SUSTAIN AND RELEASE. HOW YOU STRIKE THE STRING HAS A HUGE INFLUENCE ON THE ATTACK AND IMMEDIATE DECAY OF THE NOTE"

our hand that give us more mobility. The learning journey that sees technique as a series of answers to actual musical questions, rather than a list of clever circus tricks to impress your mates with, is ultimately a way more satisfying one, and will lead you to be much more in demand as a versatile player who makes everyone else sound good.

Even the angle at which you strike the string can change the sound of the note – whether you pull 'up' on the string in a twanging motion, picking out from the bass, or play a more conventional 'rest' stroke, where your finger comes through the string to rest on the string below (lower in pitch), that decision will affect the sound of the line, and also the shape of the note. All musical sounds have four factors, known as ADSR – attack, decay, sustain and release. How you strike the string has a huge influence on the attack and immediate decay of the note. As always, experimentation is the key: how does each variation change the sound of the line?

Finally, let's play the same line with a pick. Try holding one as per the pictures here, and start by playing the line with all downstrokes. After a fashion, you should be able to get the same insistent, driving line as you got with one finger, but with more treble on the attack. At this point, it's a good idea to experiment with different thickness of picks: these too can affect the sound you'll get, and the ease of playing. Once you've got the hang of playing only with downstrokes, try alternating down and up. See how we're back to having alternating stronger and weaker notes?

That brings us to our last learning point for this month: using the character of one technique to develop another. What I want you to try is alternating between all downstrokes for one run through the line and then using alternate picking for the next time. Try to get the sound of the two as close as possible to one another. Pay particular attention to how proactive you are with the upstroke, as downstrokes have the weight of your hand behind them. Upstrokes require a little more presence of mind to make them count!

Now, go back through the lines we've learned so far, and apply this kind of approach to the different ways of playing them. Take your favourite lines and switch between different ways of playing the notes. See how it changes the whole feel of the song. That is the zen of bass, and your task is to learn to control it.

See you next month!

STUART CLAYTON

Intermediate Tutorial

Step up your game to include semiquavers in your picking patterns. Commander Clayton shows us the right way to nail those sixteenths

Welcome to Part 5 in my series of intermediate columns focusing on plectrum playing. Over the last four instalments we've looked at the basic mechanics of the technique, with a strong focus on accurately applying the alternate picking technique to quaver-based lines. If you've followed this series so far, you'll be aware that the goal is to always play downbeats with downstrokes and upbeats with upstrokes, regardless of what has come before. Today we're going to take things to the next level and begin applying the technique to semiquaver rhythms.

In the last issue we began looking at rhythms that required you to begin a line with an upstroke. An example of this might be where the bass enters on the 'and' of a beat, or where a tie or hammer-on is used.

In the process of studying these kinds of lines, we looked at 'silent downstrokes', whereby your picking hand goes through a downward picking motion in order to then play a note using an upstroke. This is actually a very simple technique and one that you'll probably apply naturally.

We're going to put this concept to one side this month as we'll be playing continuous semiquaver lines, with no rests. We'll revisit the silent strokes concept next month, when we start looking at quaver and semiquaver combination rhythms.

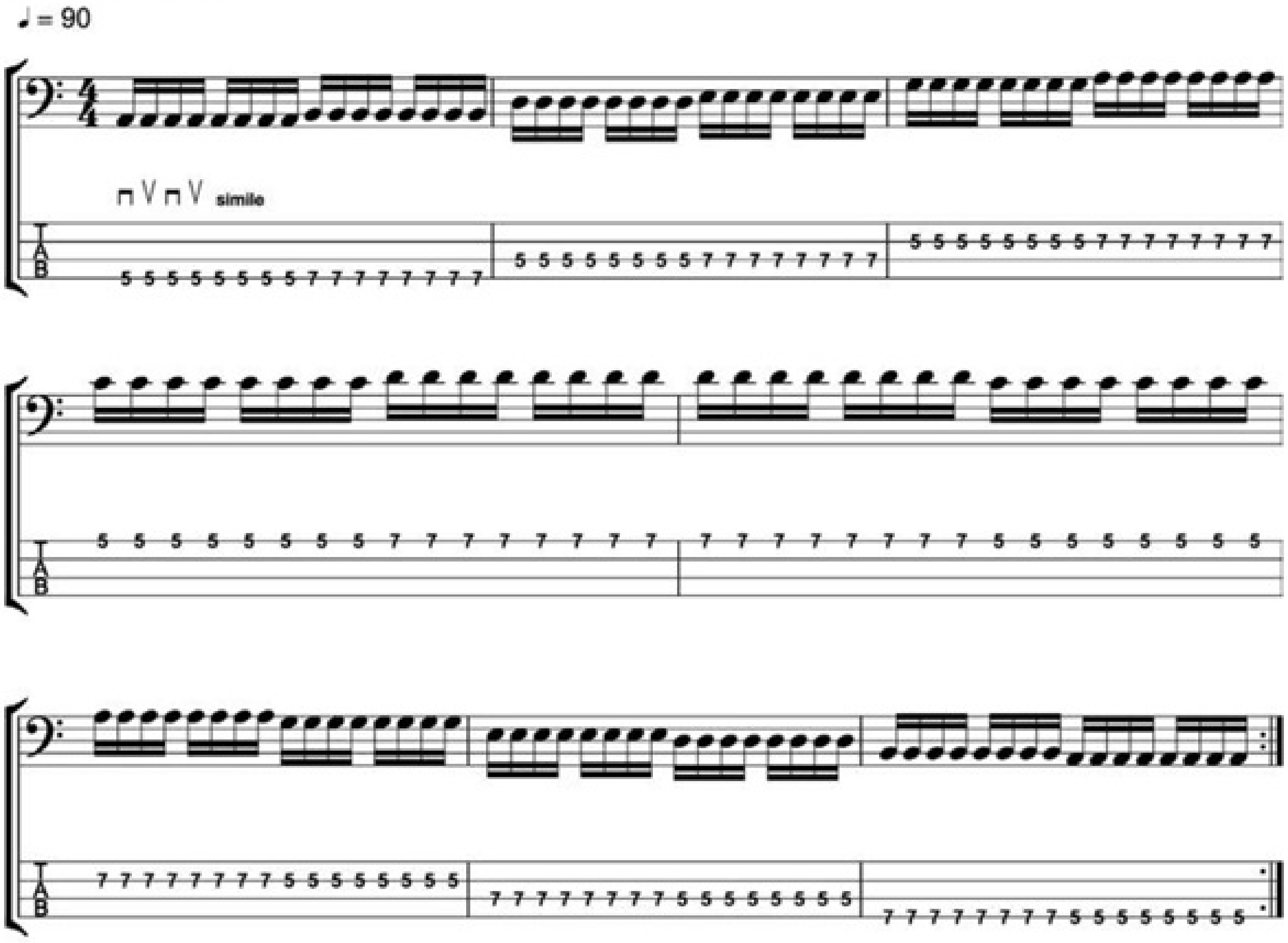
Semiquavers

So far, we've divided a crotchet beat into two quavers and played these two notes as downstroke-upstroke. We're now going to subdivide the crotchet beat down into four semiquavers: these will be played down-up-down-up. This is of course very logical, but it's important to spend some time focusing on continuous semiquaver lines, which we'll do here. Time spent on these exercises will be very beneficial when it comes to playing more complex rhythms next month.

Example 1

In this exercise you will play across the fifth and seventh frets on each string. This will help you to get comfortable with playing semiquaver rhythms with the plectrum and will be good practice for crossing strings. Try to lightly accent each downbeat – if you're playing this correctly, this will always be a downstroke. Be aware that the pitches are not important here – the pitches are deliberately simple so you can focus all of your attention on what your picking hand is doing.

EXAMPLE 1



Example 2

This exercise is a development of the previous one and requires you to cross strings on each beat. Remember to lightly accentuate each downbeat. Again, focus on your picking hand.

Example 3

Now, let's try crossing strings every half beat. Take your time with this one.

We will now look at a few exercises which require more adventurous string crossing/skipping. These are all based on an A major chord shape of root-fifth-octave-major third (tenth). These exercises have a very slow tempo of 70bpm, but feel free to play them even more slowly if needs be. Some of these will prove quite taxing for your picking hand.

Example 4

In this exercise the chord tone at the beginning of each beat moves. On beat one you play the fifth on the A string, on beat two you play the octave on the D string, on beat three you play the third on the G string and on beat four you play the octave on the D string again. This is a great exercise for string crossing/skipping, but it can take some time to master. The challenge of course is playing a downstroke on one string, then an upstroke on another.

Example 5

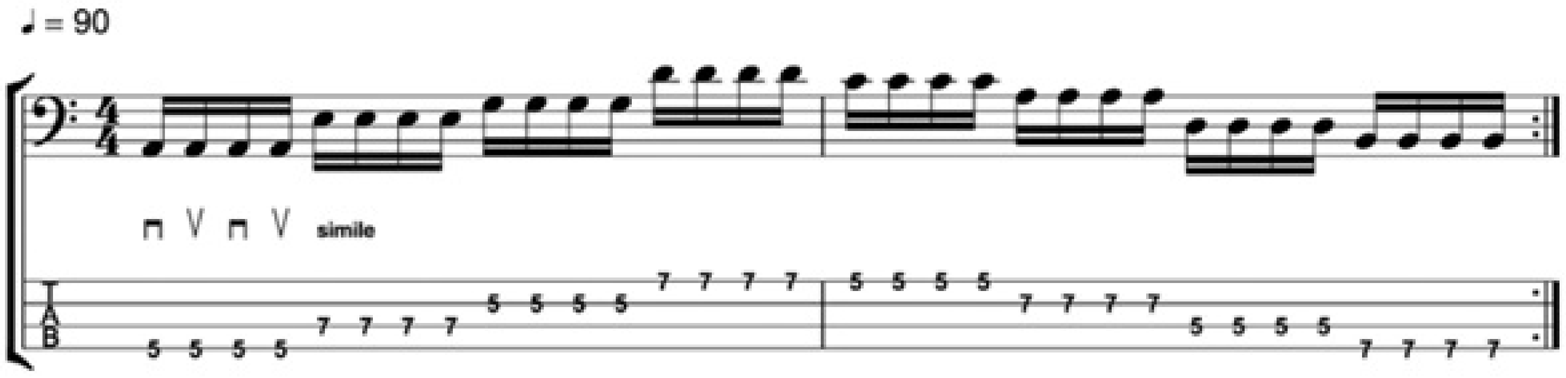
This exercise is a development of the previous one. This time the moving chord tone is on the second semiquaver of each beat.

Example 6

Now the moving chord tone is on the third semiquaver subdivision of the beat.

> "THIS IS A GREAT EXERCISE FOR STRING CROSSING/SKIPPING"

EXAMPLE 2



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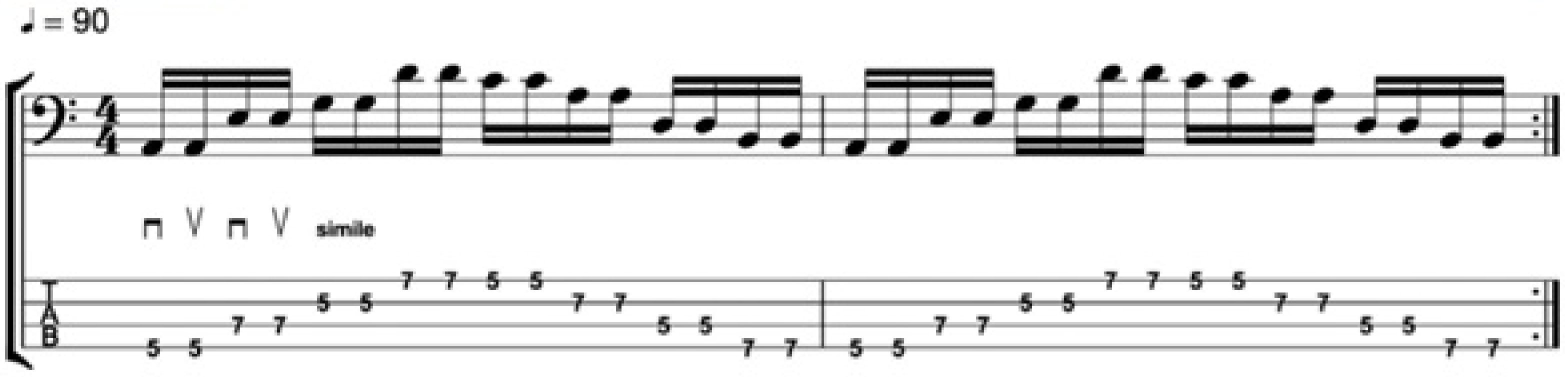
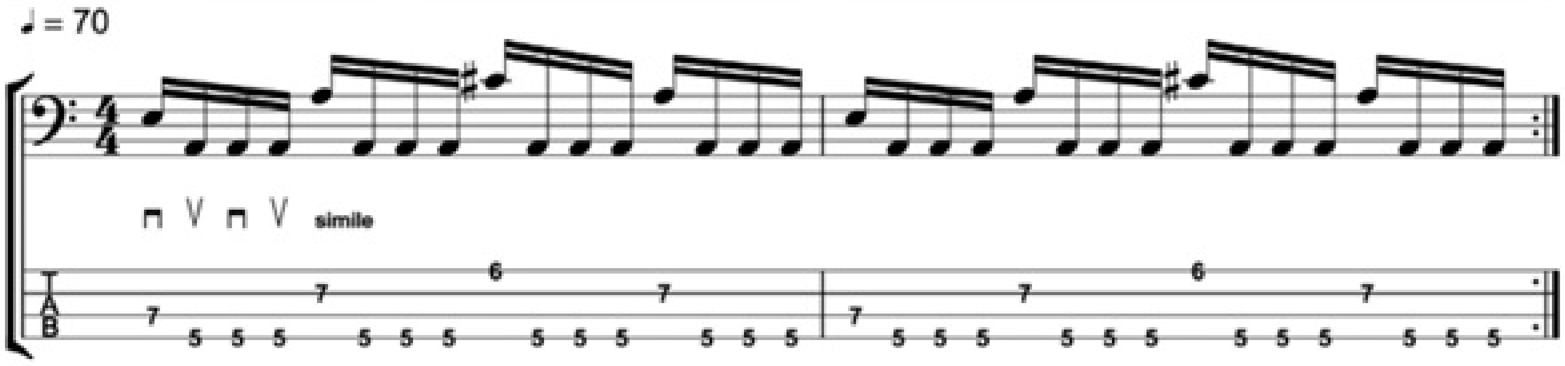


EXAMPLE 4



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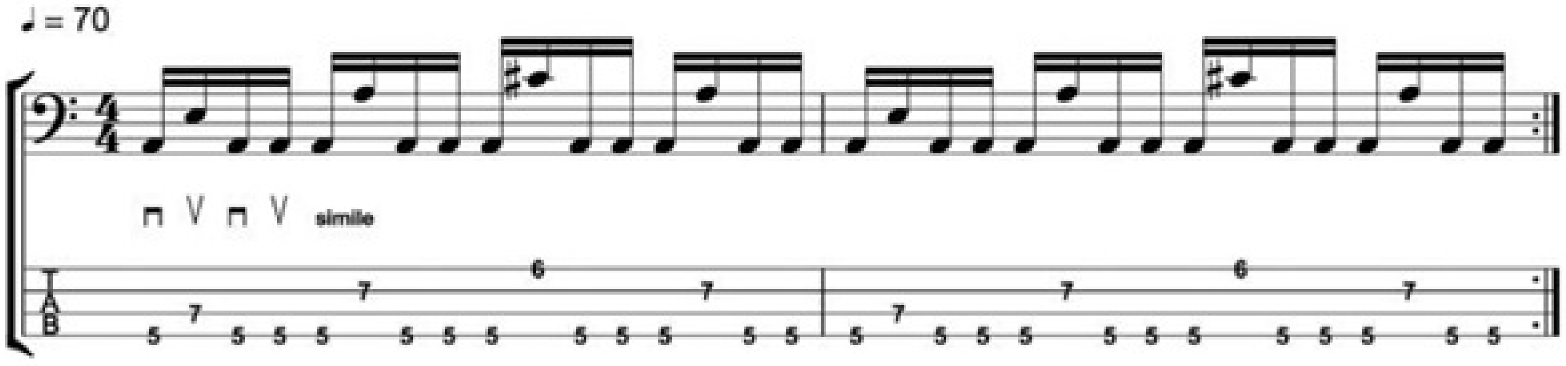
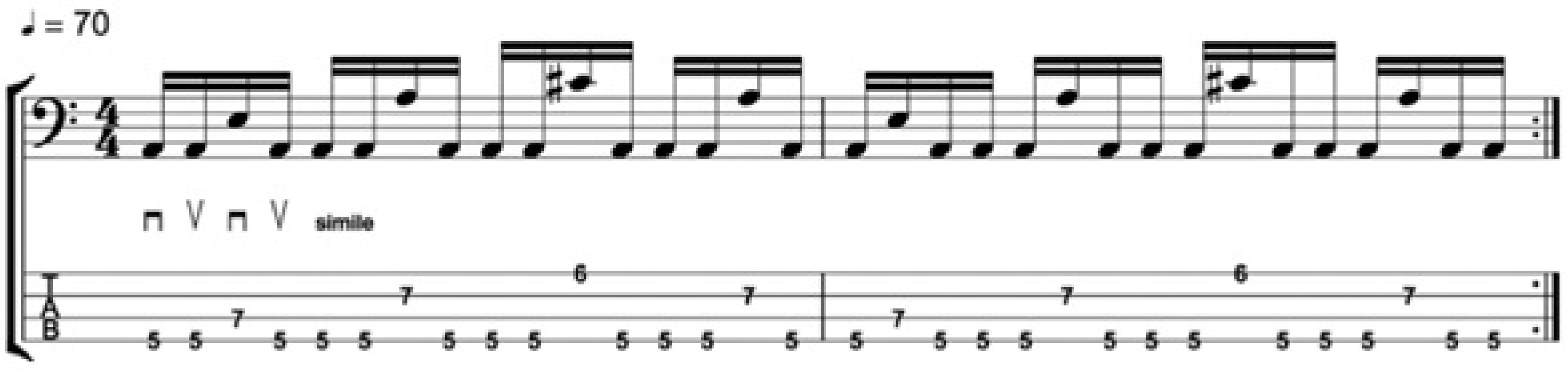


EXAMPLE 6



Example 7

Finally, the moving chord tone is on the fourth subdivision of the beat.

When playing the previous four exercises, it's crucial that you maintain a continuous down-up-down-up picking sequence. This can be difficult when you also have to cross strings – for example, playing a downstroke on the G-string followed by an upstroke on the E-string is tough, but it's a great workout for developing your plectrum technique.

You will no doubt see scope for writing your own exercises that continue to challenge you in this way. For example, you could play each chord tone twice, followed by the root note A twice. You then move these two notes to different locations within the beat. There's a lot you can do with these simple ideas, but further investigation will help you develop your playing even further.

We'll now look at some bass-lines that are based on continuous semiquavers. Although these have their challenges, you'll probably find them easier than the previous seven exercises.

Example 8

This exercise is a simple continuous semiquaver line in the key of C. For the most part, the bass remains on one note in each bar, with the last beat of each containing a simple fill that eases the transition to the next note.

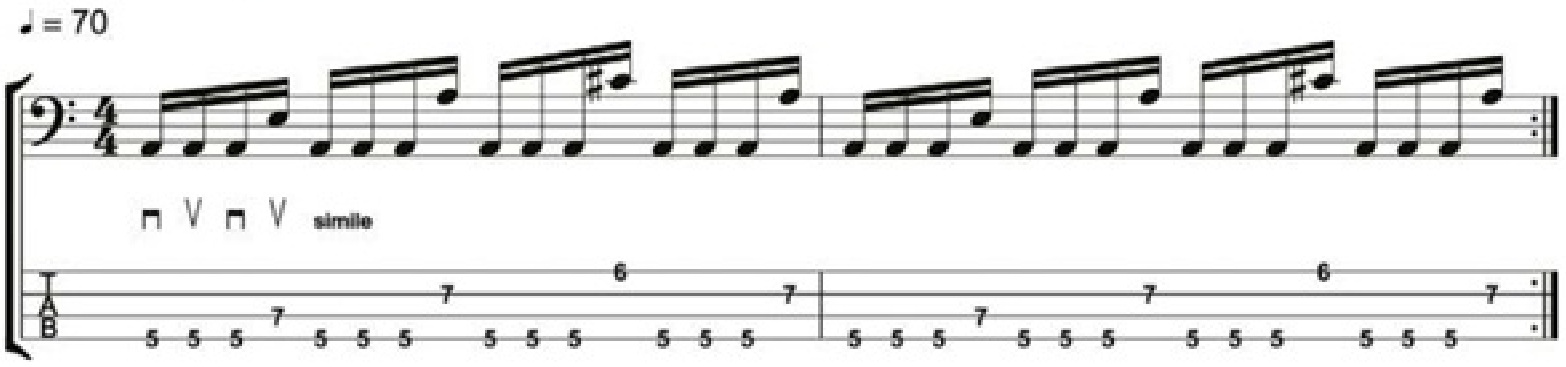
Example 9

This exercise is in the key of F minor. Note that the line begins with an anacrusis (introductory notes or phrase), in this case two semiquavers that are played on the 'and' of the fourth beat of the bar before the main line begins.

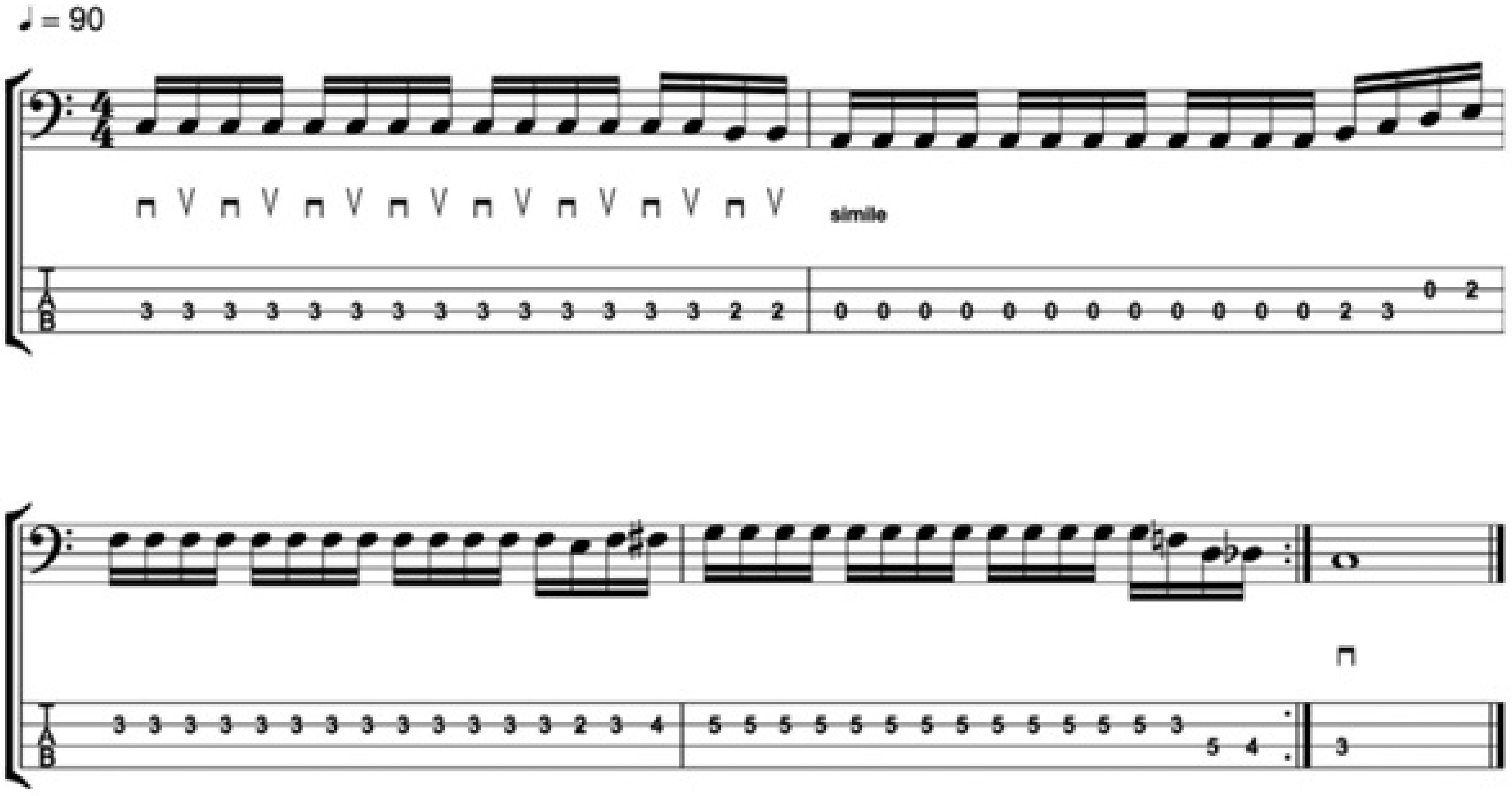
Example 10

This exercise is a funk groove that features a lot of string skipping. There are also a few ghost notes – remember that these are merely pitch-less 'dead' notes that are played in exactly the same way as any other note.

EXAMPLE 7

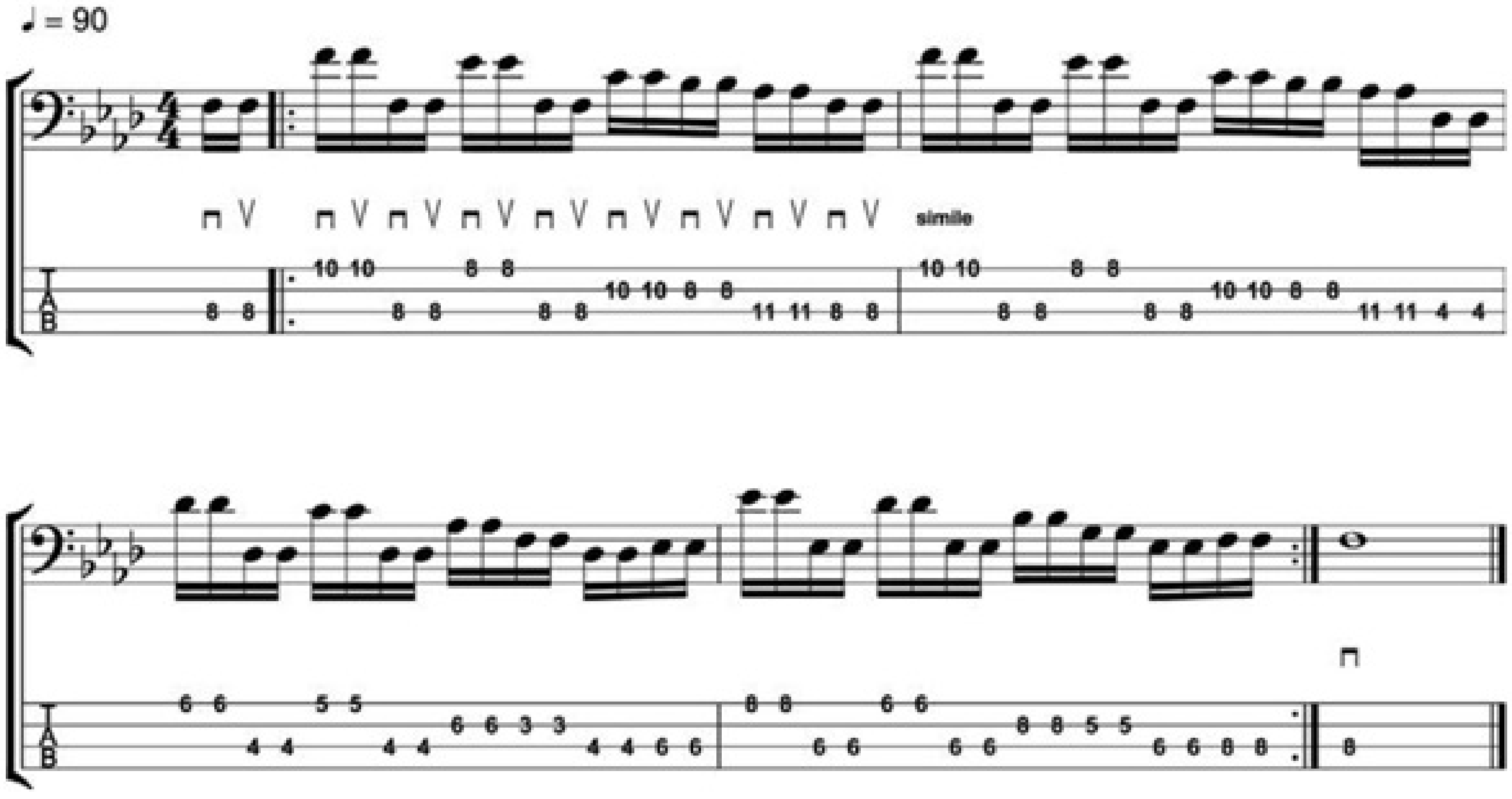


EXAMPLE 8



> "THERE'S A LOT YOU CAN DO WITH THESE SIMPLE IDEAS, BUT FURTHER INVESTIGATION WILL HELP YOU DEVELOP YOUR PLAYING EVEN FURTHER"

EXAMPLE 9

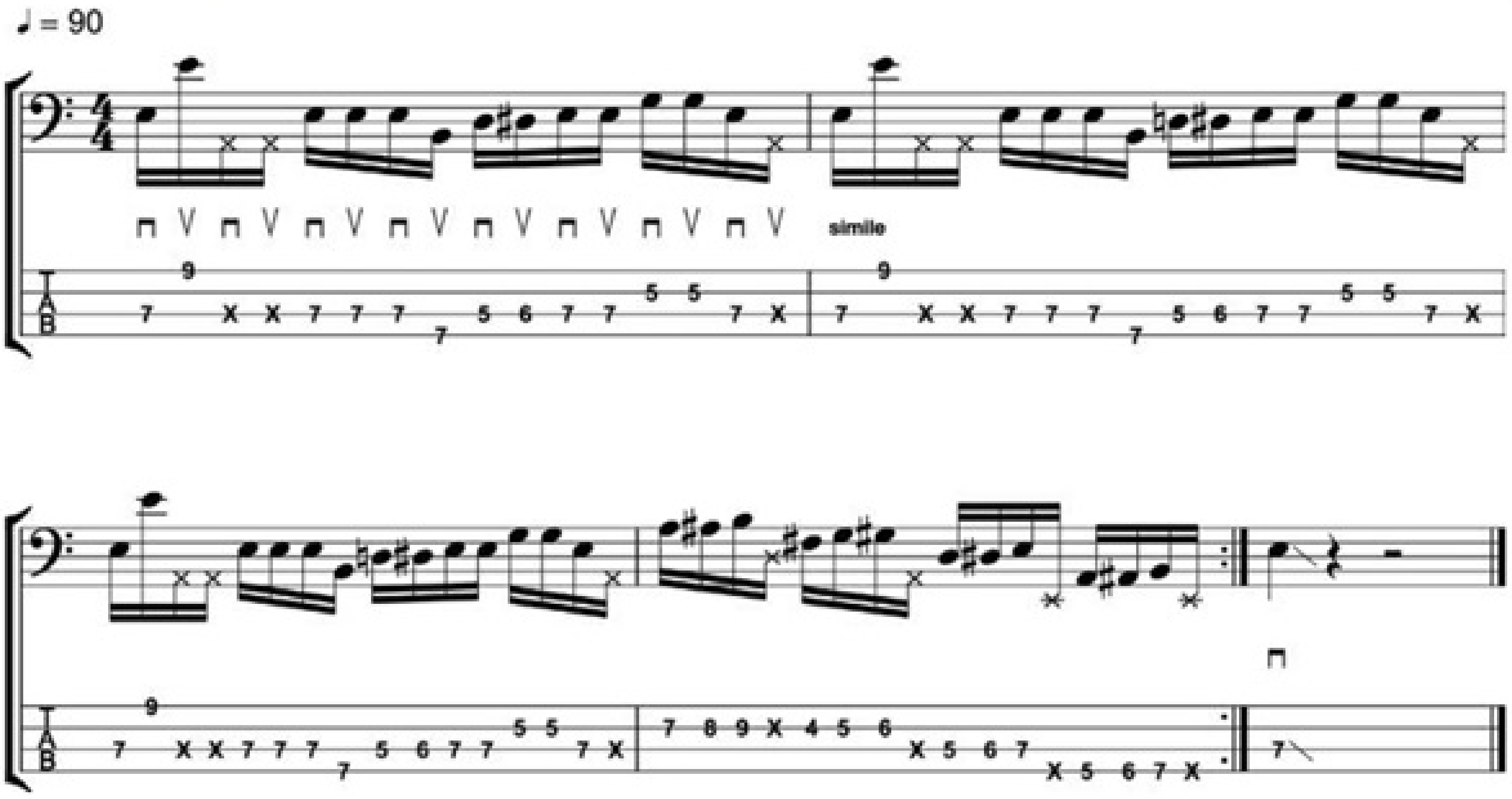


This column has given you a lot of new information to digest, so it's important that you recognise that some of this will take time to sink in and begin to feel comfortable. If you're serious about developing your plectrum skills, make these exercises a part of your daily practice schedule, and be prepared to work on them for a few weeks or months.

Don't put any pressure on yourself to have mastered these lines before the next column: these exercises will continue to be good lines to practise even as we add new concepts into the mix.

Next month we will be covering quaver and semiquaver combination rhythms, so we'll be revisiting the concept of playing 'silent strokes'.

EXAMPLE 10



Until then, practise hard and feel free to contact me through the magazine if you have any questions.

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PHIL MANN

Advanced Tutorial

On the curry menu of bass tuition, Phil Mann's advanced section gets three chillis – can you hack it?

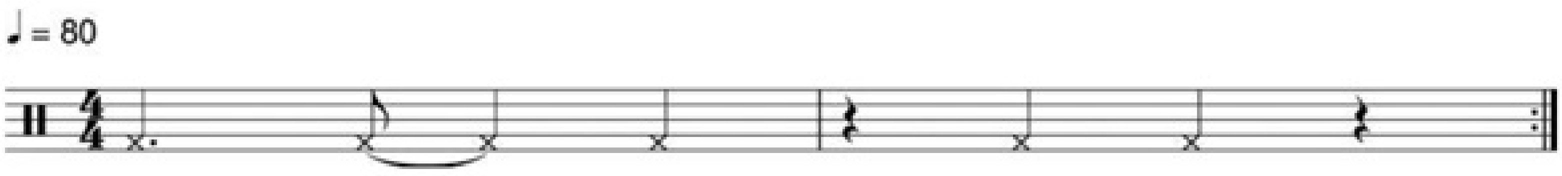
Although I'd like to think that you've all been spending the majority of the last month working hard on the execution of Tumbao bass-lines and in turn, strengthening your understanding and interpretation of clave patterns, I know in reality it's more likely that your new found form of Afro-Cuban inspired motivation has led to you sporting a floral shirt and heading in the direction of your nearest Brazilian-themed nightclub. No? Perhaps that was just me then...

The introduction to Latin music's vast array of melodic terminology and rhythmic disciplines may be a completely new field of study to some of you. So, unless you have the ability to seamlessly transcend into an uncharted language, as Harry Potter managed to do with Parseltongue, it's probably going to be worth you reviewing a few bits of background knowledge to reinforce the studies we're about to embark on.

Just as with contemporary western styles of music, the subgenres of Afro-Cuban music are differentiated by a number of quintessential variants. Where you could be accustomed to playing semiquaver phrases in funk, or swung triplets in blues, it's common that syncopated Tumbao bass-lines will expect you to tie the note residing on beat four of each bar to the first beat of the subsequent bar, while in samba you'll be required to be familiar with cut common time. Regardless of these differences, one consistent component that is present throughout all of the aforementioned styles is the clave: a two-bar rhythmic pattern that is repeated throughout the duration of almost every Afro-Cuban composition.

The rhythmic information noted in **Example 1** revisits last month's introduction to the 'Son' clave. This seminal pattern is commonly presented in two forms, denoted as either a (3:2) clave, or a (2:3) clave. Ignoring the tie present in bar one, note that this measure's rhythm consists of three notes, where the second bar only features two. The aforementioned bracketed numbers simply dictate which bar is to be executed first; in any performance environment, these two measures can be switched accordingly to suit the composition.

EXAMPLE 1



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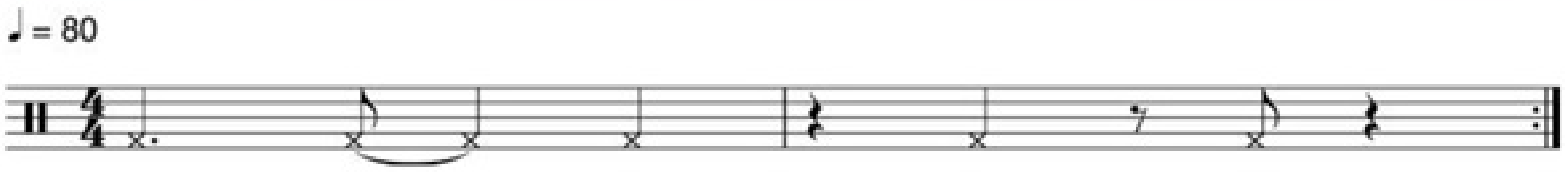

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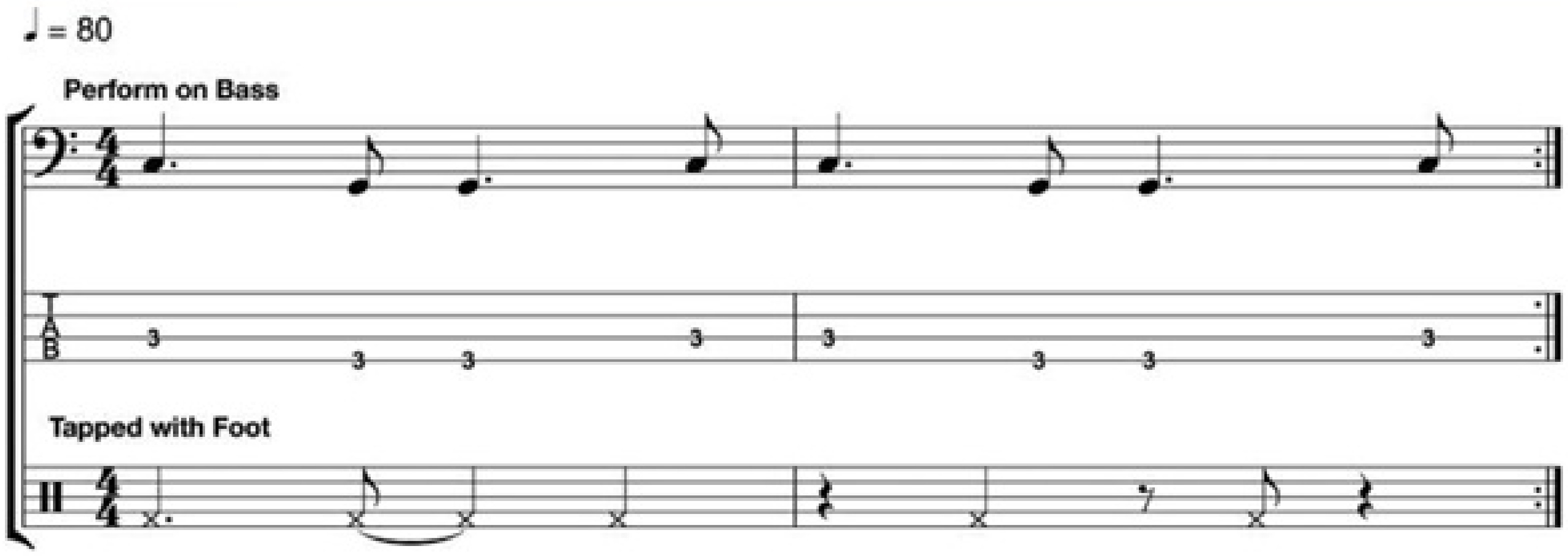


"KEEP YOUR PLAYING RELAXED AND NON-INTRUSIVE"

Example 1

Son (3:2)
The interpretation of the characteristics of traditional claves has evolved over time. One seminal example of this is how jazz musicians attempted to decipher their rhythmic content back in the 1950s. While endeavouring to include them in compositions of their own, an array of modern clave began to emerge, giving birth to numerous interpretations of the traditional stylistic components in forms such as the bossa nova. You'll observe that the rhythmic content of this clave closely resembles that of its cousin, with only a slight alteration to the second bar. The accents that traditionally reside on the third and fifth quavers of the Son clave now become apparent on the third and sixth, to form the bossa nova, a seemingly minor, yet critical difference.

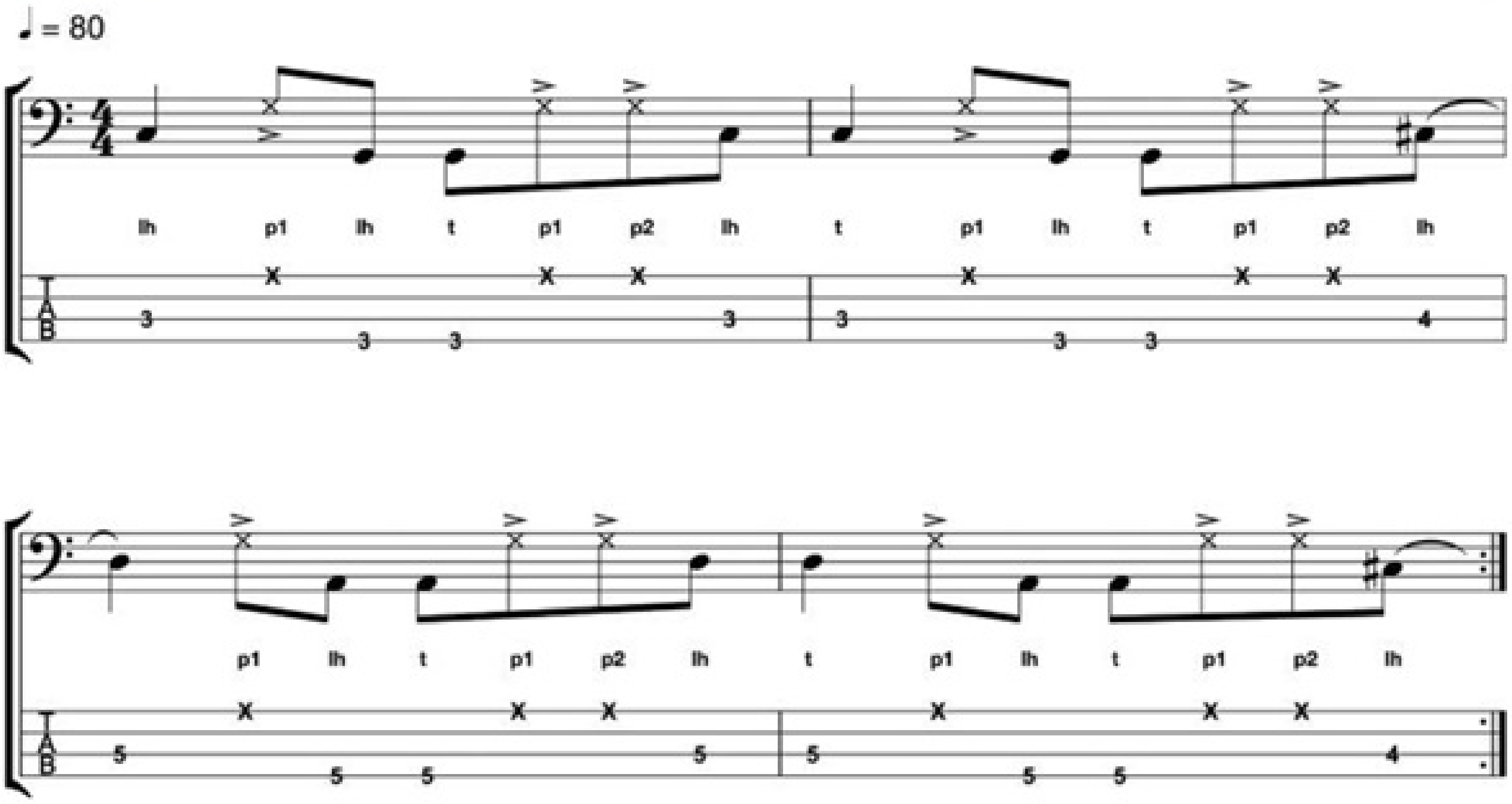
Example 2

Bossa Nova (3:2)
You'll discover that the rhythmic information portrayed by the bass in a bossa nova differs to that which is executed in a traditional Tumbao. Significantly, the bossa nova tends to play a much simpler (yet equally disciplined) rhythm throughout. Unfortunately, this 'simplicity' doesn't mean that the information presented in Example 3 will prove any easier to execute: as with last month's studies, you're going to be required to simultaneously perform a bass-line while tapping your foot on the associated clave. Practise hard and you'll achieve it.

Example 3

Historically, bossa novas were first introduced through the performance of chord melody on a nylon-strung guitar. In order to simultaneously perform both chord and bass-line patterns, an interval of a descending fourth between root and fifth intervals was encouraged so that the two performance principles wouldn't interfere with one another. However, these days

EXAMPLE 4



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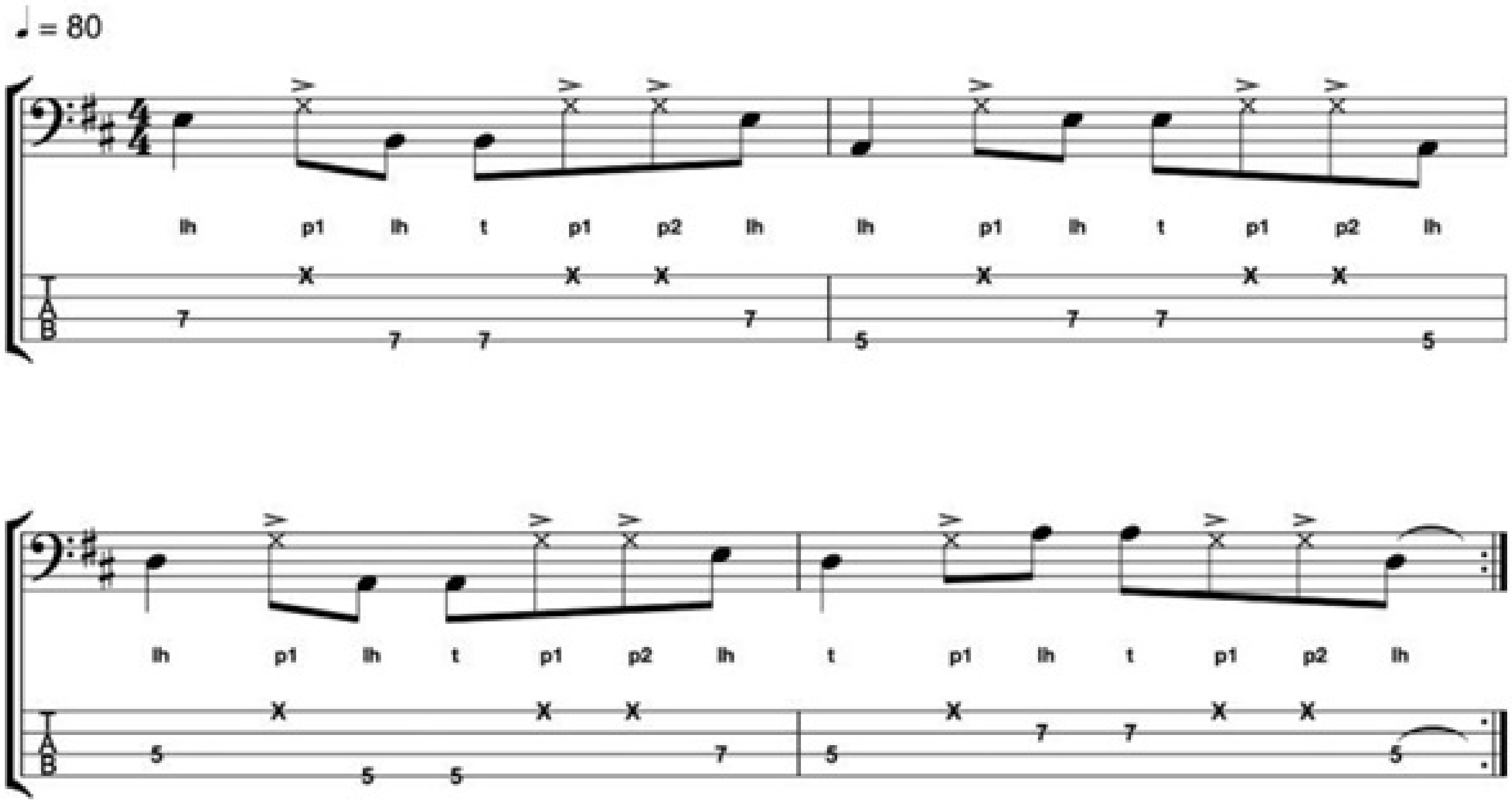


it's quite common for a bassist to play root and fifth intervals in an ascending manner. Example 4 takes our somewhat unassuming bossa nova pattern and continues to modernise it with an array of technical adaptations.

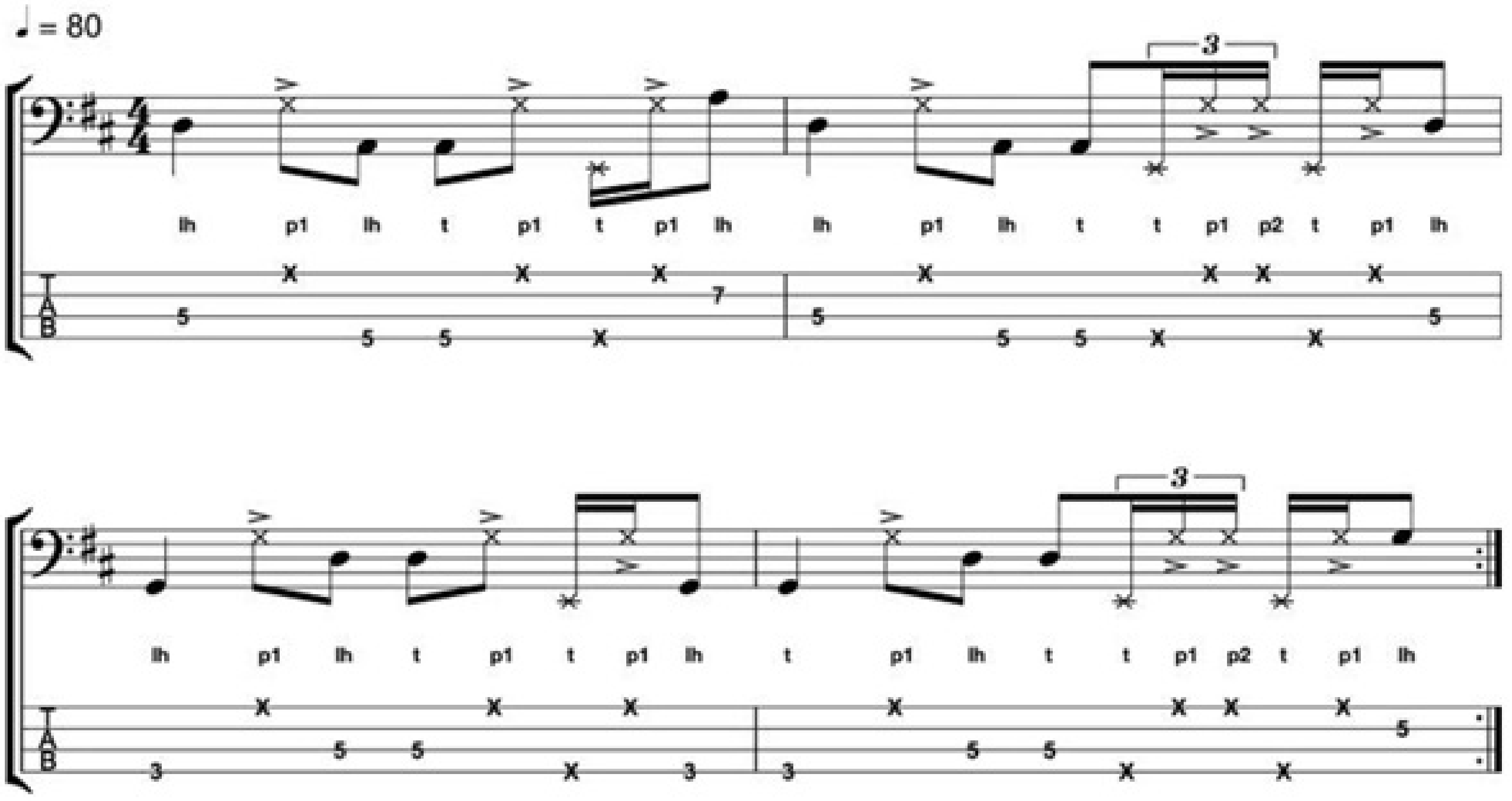
Example 4

Although clearly reminiscent of one another, Example 5 modulates the technical aspects of Example 4 from the key of C to D major, before then moving them through a II-V-I chord progression. Over-accentuating plucks and deadnotes would not be stylistically correct within a bossa nova's vernacular, so try to keep your playing relaxed and non-intrusive throughout the example.

Example 5

Remaining in the key of D major, Example 6 introduces a few crafty semiquaver triplets to spice up our melodic playground. Although they're technically challenging to execute, remember that these rhythmic passages are still only supportive to those notes that align with the clave. If you can tap your foot to the rhythm of a bossa nova clave while performing this example, you'll be well on your way to becoming an Afro-Cuban Jedi!

EXAMPLE 6



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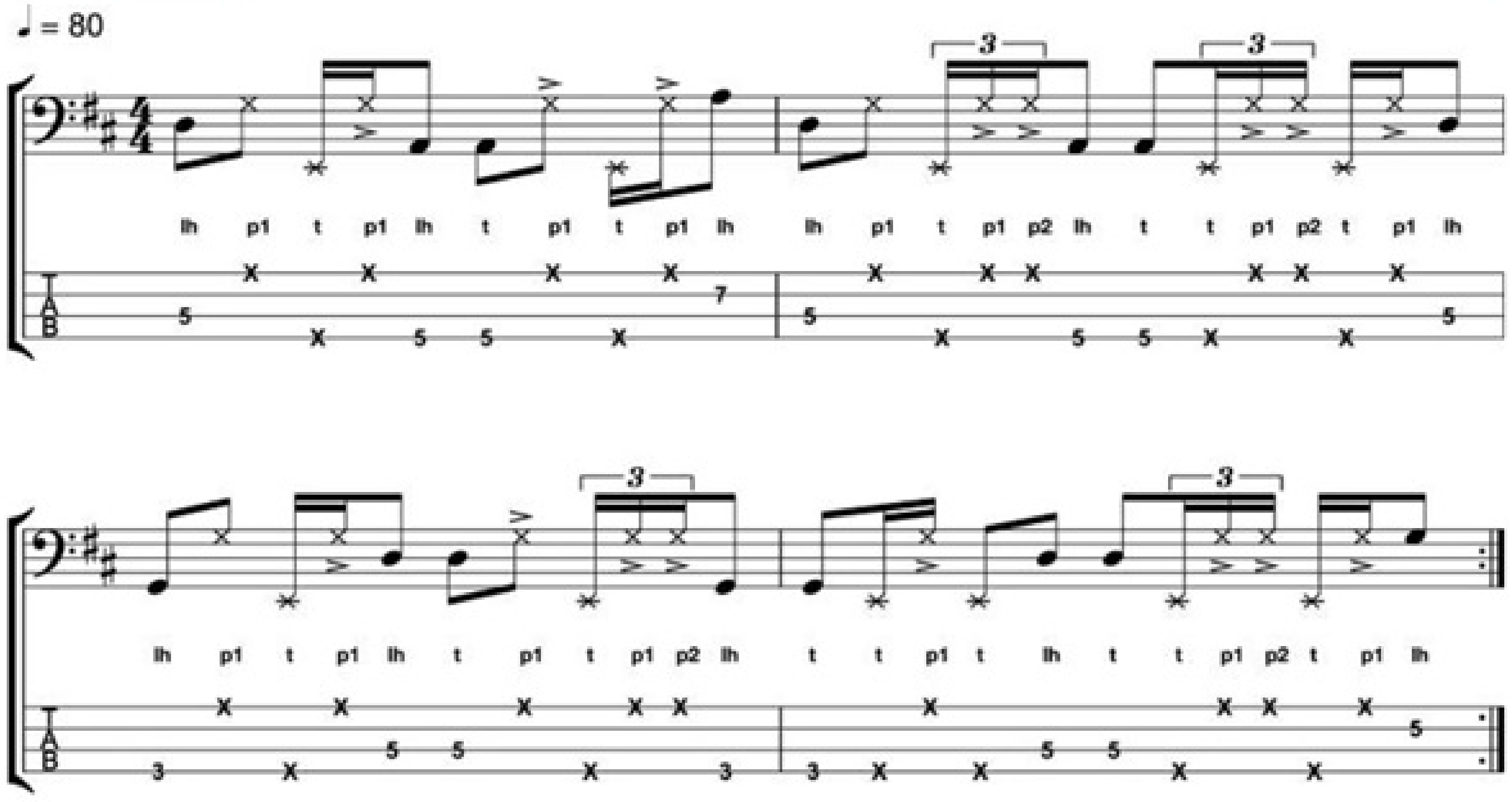

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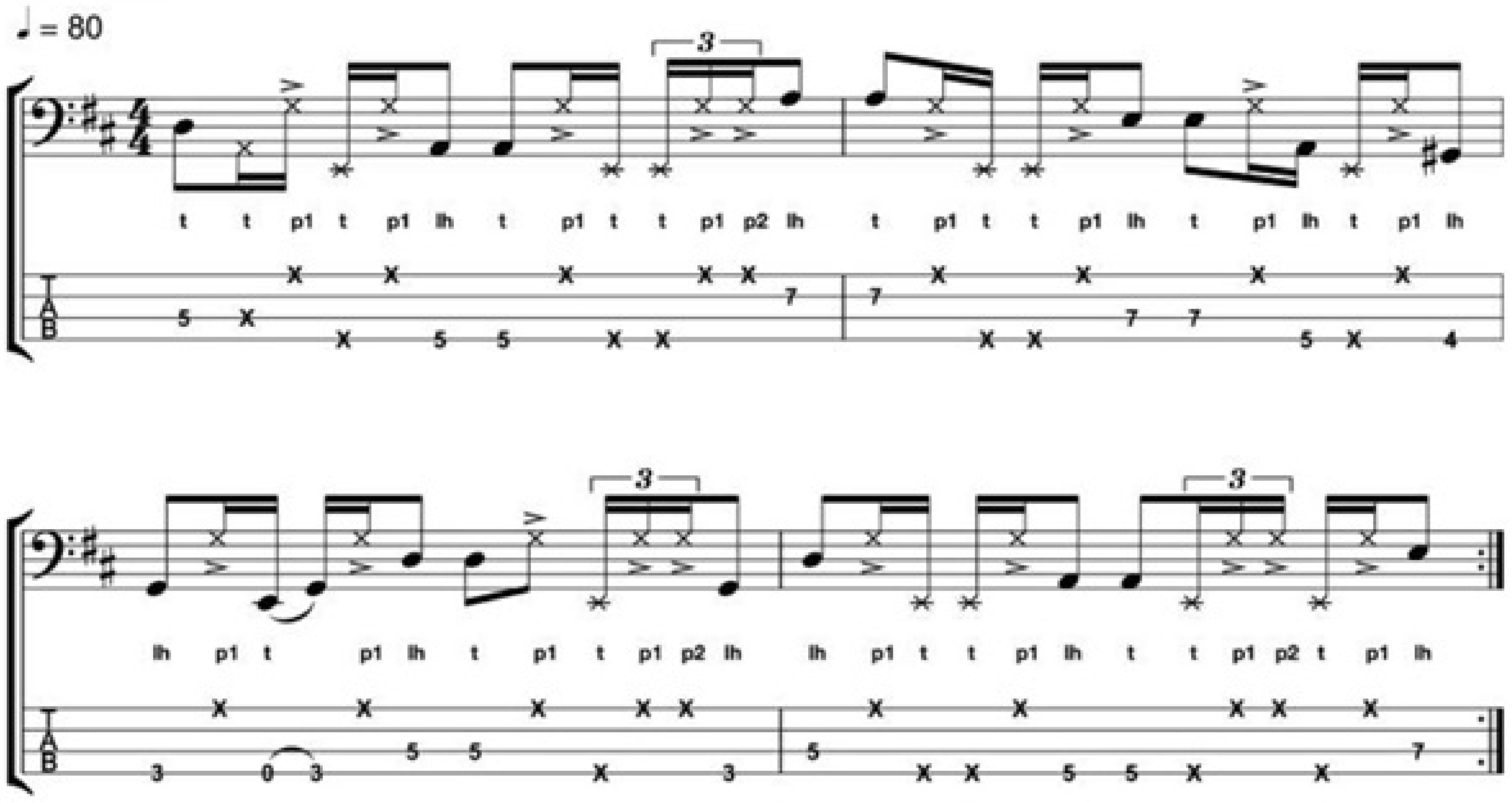

> "PRACTISE HARD AND YOU'LL ACHIEVE IT"

Phil laying down the low end at the London Bass Guitar Show

Example 6

There's nothing wrong with taking inspiration from an array of methodologies and using them to inspire your compositional work. In this month's penultimate exercise, I've continued to reference our knowledge of bossa nova studies, as well as exploring some other rhythmical opportunities. One example of this is the diverse delivery of semiquaver triplets in the second measure; although not entirely stylistically correct, using your thumb, index and middle fingers in conjunction with one another to produce these rhythms is great fun.

Examples 7 and 8

Referencing the primary chords of D major, this month's final exercise requires several permutations of slap technique. Specifically, cast your attention to the way in which the notes have been executed in bar two.

Hopefully you'll discover some interesting and innovative rhythmic concepts that will inspire you further. I'll leave you to relish the melodic physics in your own time...

Until next month!

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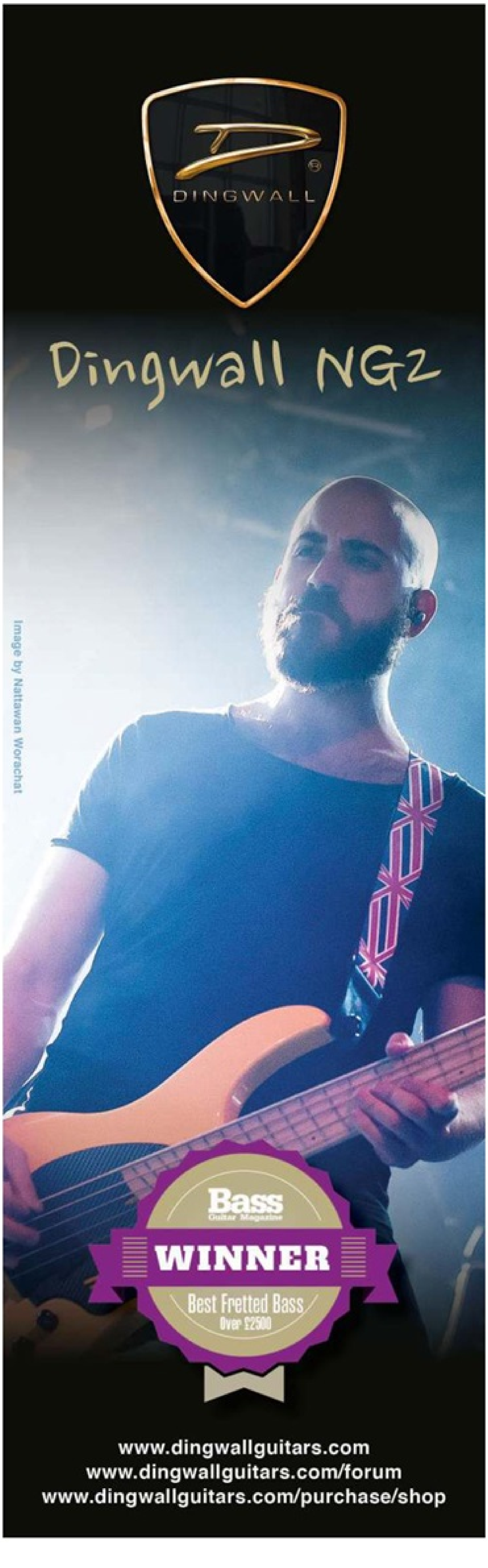

Classic

BASS ALBUMS

Mike 'Animal' Brooks celebrates the massive 1987 album *Hysteria* by Brit-rockers Def Leppard

Continuing our look at three mega-sellers from 1987, this month we cast a nostalgic eye, and ear, over Def Leppard's fourth album *Hysteria*. This album took three years to record, had its fair share of ups and downs along the way, defined the term 'slow burn' in the US and ultimately changed the sound of melodic rock. It also redefined the genre's production standards.

Released in August 1987, the album reached number one in both the UK and the US and has shifted over 25 million copies worldwide. Over a two-year period, no fewer than seven singles were released from *Hysteria*, whose full backstory could fill this entire magazine. Suffice it to say that Sheffield rockers Leppard had a vision of the album they wanted to create, rather than settling for a simple repeat of 1983's *Pyromania*.

Producers Mutt Lange and Jim Steinman came and departed, before good fortune and timing saw Lange return to the fold and go on to create a sound, and a way of working, that has created a legend of its own. His time, craftsmanship and attention to detail were exhausting, as the band members are quick to confirm, at a time when studio technology was developing rapidly. The proof was in the pudding and 30 years on, *Hysteria* is still a defining moment in rock music – not least because of the blood, sweat and tears incurred to create it.

Bassist Rick 'Sav' Savage used Randall amplification live, as did the rest of the band, but for the album, a variety of amp and recording devices were used. For those tracks using bass guitar – yes, synth bass was used elsewhere! – Rick favoured Hamer Scarab and Blitz basses, preferring to use a pick for consistency of attack and tone. It comes as no surprise that there is a considerable smattering of sampled bass tones for specific bass textures, and once *Hysteria* was taken on the road, Rick played some keyboard bass live.

The album opener 'Women' was the first single released in the US ('Animal' was released in the UK and other territories) and despite a moderate chart placing, it didn't set the world alight. For almost a year, the album didn't take off, until the fourth single 'Pour Some Sugar On Me' hit a chord with the American public – particularly in strip clubs, it is alleged.

'Rocket', with its 70s musical references and multi-layered harmonies, hints at the band trying to push the musical envelope away from the standard twin-guitar biker rock of Leppard's contemporaries in the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. 'Animal' is a classic example of the radio metal genre, proving to be a big hit across Europe. It was a shot in the arm that the band very much needed, after four years away from the public eye.

'Love Bites', the band's first number one single, 'Pour Some Sugar On Me' and 'Armageddon It' kept the radio-friendly aspect of the album very much to the fore, remaining in heavy rotation on radio stations across the globe from 1987 to '89, a time when any major album usually contained more than the traditional three singles. Mutt Lange's production was immaculate and almost clinical, but from a bass perspective, there is no lack of pulsing bottom end holding the tracks together.

Tracks such as 'Don't Shoot Shotgun', 'Run Riot' and 'Hysteria' have far more of a traditional bass feel and sound. It's almost as though the singles that form side one (remember that?) have been embellished with sampled sounds, while the album tracks of side two allowed Rick to do what he does best.

When grunge hit in the early 90s, Def Leppard found themselves on a slippery slope: *Hysteria* remains their high water mark, an impressive example of dedication and love for the music overcoming the odds.

"MUTT LANGE'S PRODUCTION WAS IMMACULATE AND ALMOST CLINICAL, BUT FROM A BASS PERSPECTIVE, THERE IS NO LACK OF PULSING BOTTOM END HOLDING THE TRACKS TOGETHER"

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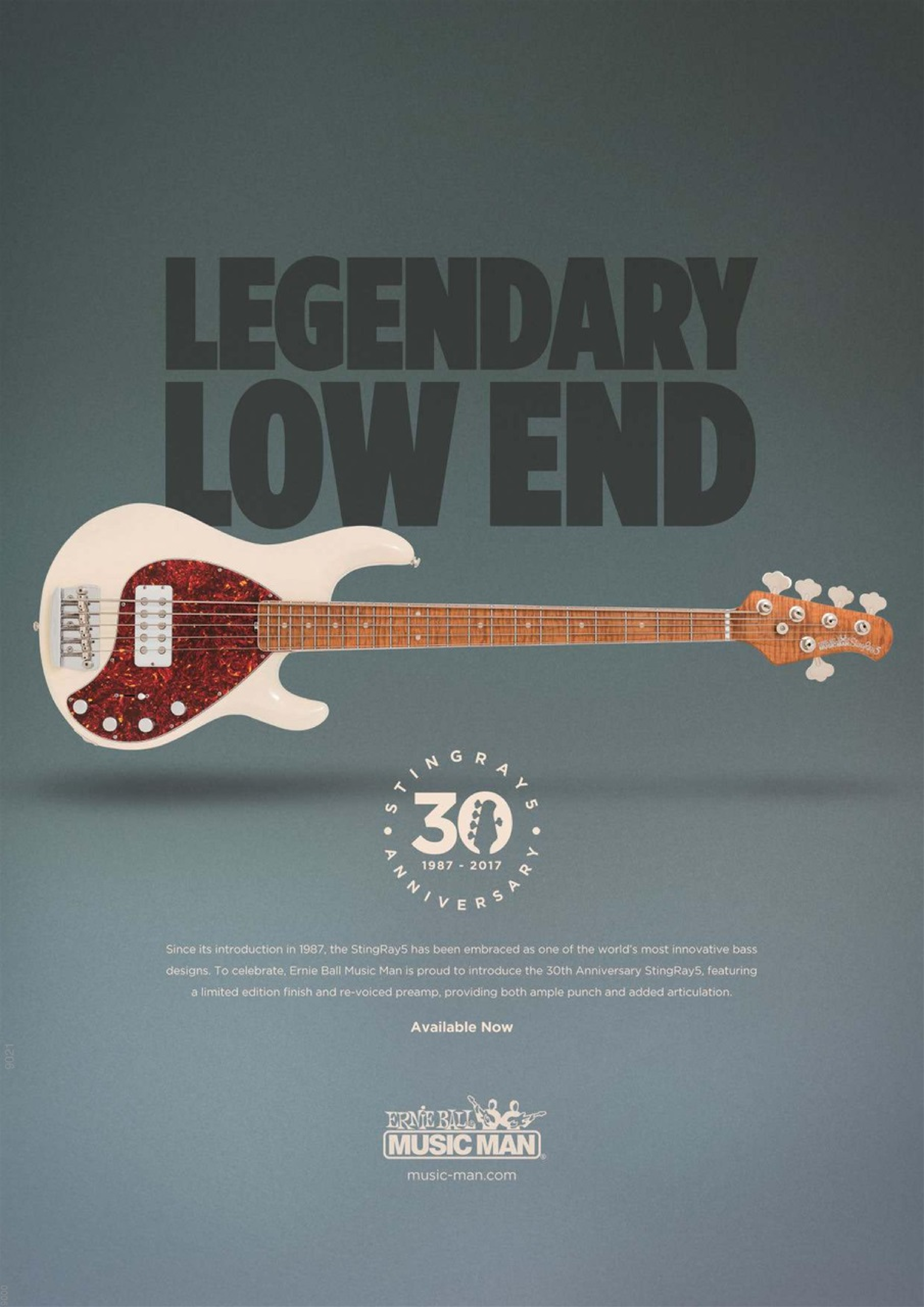
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